

# Christ's manifestation of Himself unto those who love Him

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## Outline

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1. WHAT it is for Christ to manifest Himself.
2. THAT Christ will manifest Himself unto those who love Him, appears in that His love engages Him and His Word engages Him hereunto.
3. HOW Christ manifests Himself unto those who love Him.
4. WHEN does Christ manifest Himself unto those who love Him?
5. WHERE does Christ manifest Himself unto those who love Him?

I come now to the APPLICATION;

“...He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself to him.” John 14:21

We read in Luke 4:22, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.” Never did such gracious and sweet words drop from the lips of any man who ever lived, as those from the lips of Christ when He was here upon the earth; and of all Christ's words, those which He spoke to His disciples in His last sermon, before His last suffering, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, are superlatively sweet, and none more sweet in this sermon than the words of my text read unto you, “He who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” In the former part of the verse, we have the character of one who truly loves Christ, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me.” In the latter part of the verse, which is my text, we have the privilege of one who truly loves Christ; and that is in three promises which Christ makes unto him:

- (1) he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father;
- (2) and I will love him;
- (3) and will manifest Myself to him.

It is the last of these promises, which I shall speak unto, by way of appendix unto my treatise of the love which true Christians have, and ought to have, to Christ—and that is the promise of Christ's manifesting Himself unto such as love Him. And the doctrine is this: **Christ will manifest Himself unto such as love Him.**

In handling this point, I shall show:

- (1) what it is for Christ to manifest Himself;
- (2) that Christ will manifest Himself to those who love Him;
- (3) how Christ manifests Himself unto such;
- (4) when Christ manifests Himself unto such;
- (5) where Christ manifests Himself unto such as love Him;
- (6) lastly, make some application.

## 1. WHAT it is for Christ to manifest Himself.

(1) Christ manifests Himself—when He makes a clearer revelation unto His disciples of the excellency of His person; when He further unveils Himself and lets forth some beams and rays with greater luster and brightness, to reveal more of the radiance and transcendence of His soul-ravishing beauty unto them, of which they had but a dimmer light and darker

apprehensions before. And this is done when Christ more fully imparts the Spirit of wisdom and revelation unto them. Upon this account, the Apostle prayed on behalf of the believing Ephesians that the Lord would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten their understandings in the knowledge of Him, Ephesians 1:16-18. They had the Spirit and some knowledge of Christ before—but he prays that God would give them a *fuller measure* of the Spirit to make a *clearer discovery* of Christ—that the eyes of their understandings might be more and more enlightened unto a more spiritual discerning of the surpassing beauty and excellency in Christ's person, in the knowledge of whom the most enlightened Christians are capable of further growth unto the end of their life. Hence that exhortation of the Apostle Peter, 2 Peter 3:18, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

(2) Christ manifests Himself when He makes a deep impression and gives a sweet sense to His disciples, of His presence. Christ is never really absent from those who love Him—but He may *seem* to be so sometimes. They may apprehend Him to be afar off. He may, and often does, withdraw the *sense* of His presence, Song of Solomon 5:6, "I opened to my beloved—but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone!" Christ manifests Himself when He draws near to His people, and makes them feel that He is near; giving them a sweet sense of His presence through the powerful breathings of His Spirit upon them, whereby their hearts are quickened, enlarged, and drawn forth towards Himself, and their graces excited unto powerful exercise.

(3) And, chiefly, Christ manifests Himself when He makes revelation of His love unto those who love Him; when He gives them to see not only the *beauty* of His face—but also the *smiles* of His face; when He gives them to behold the amiableness of His countenance; when He sheds abroad the sense of His love into their hearts, giving them a full persuasion of His special love unto them, and also a sweet sense thereof.

Thus Christ sometimes looks and speaks kindly unto His people; and this sweet language is not spoken to the bodily ear—but inwardly by His Spirit to their souls when He says to the soul, "I am your salvation and your Savior! I have loved you with an everlasting love, and My love is unchangeable. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed—but My loving-kindness shall never depart and be removed from you. I have given Myself *for* you, and I have given Myself *to* you, and I will never repent of this gift. I have chosen you for Myself, called and joined you unto Myself, and I will never repent of this choice, nor allow you to be disjointed from Me forever. I have you upon My heart and keep you in My hand—and no powers of earth or hell shall be able to pluck you from there! I have given you My grace, and I will show you My glory! Before long, I will appear in the world and receive you to Myself that, where I am, there you may be also. Dry up, then, your tears! Clear up your countenance, banish your fears, droop no longer, despond no more—but be of good cheer! Your sins are forgiven! Your name is written in My book, which

none can blot out. You have a true love for Me, and My Father Himself loves you, and I love you with a most endeared love, and therefore, do not question or doubt My love any more!"

Thus Christ manifests Himself and His love, sometimes, unto drooping desponding souls.

## 2. THAT Christ will manifest Himself unto those who love Him, appears in that His love engages Him and His Word engages Him hereunto.

His **love** engages Him. The love of Christ is like fire that cannot conceal itself long. There is no fire so strong, or has such a vehement flame—as the love of Christ to His people. Joseph had a great love to his brethren, notwithstanding all their unkindness; and, although he concealed himself for awhile and spoke roughly unto them—yet after they were sensible of their fault and were filled with perplexing fears, he could conceal himself no longer from them, as we read in Genesis 45:1, "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all that stood by him, he wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph!" And verse 2, "Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near me, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt!" So Christ may conceal Himself for awhile from His people, whatever love He has to them and whatever they have to Him. Some unkindness they have shown may be the cause of this hiding; but, when they are sensible of their fault, full of grief and sorrow for their offences, His love will not permit Him to hide Himself much longer. His love will engage Him to manifest and reveal Himself, and say, "I am Jesus, your Savior! Come near Me, My brethren! Come near Me, that you may have a clearer view of Me, that you may know Me, and know that I love you!"

The **Word** of Christ also engages Him to manifest Himself unto those who love Him. It is Christ's promise here in the text, "He who loves Me, shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." Christ's words are sure; true and faithful is Christ's name. The ordinances of the heavens may sooner fail—than Christ fail of His Word and promise.

### 3. HOW Christ manifests Himself unto those who love Him.

**(1) Christ here, in this world, manifests Himself but in PART and darkly.** The soul is not now capable of the fullest and clearest manifestation of Christ. This is a happiness reserved for heaven. 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which You have given Me." It is *hereafter* that Christ's disciples shall be perfectly like Christ, and shall have a perfect manifestation of Christ, that they shall see Him as He is. It is *hereafter* that they shall behold His glory. The luster and brightness of Christ's glory is so great that, should He now let forth the beams thereof upon them—it would dazzle and astound them; it would strike them blind. Yes, it would strike them dead.

There is need, because of their weakness, that Christ should keep a *veil* on His face when He makes discovery of Himself. They cannot now bear the full manifestation of Christ, therefore Christ reveals Himself but in part. As the Queen of Sheba said, concerning Solomon's wisdom and prosperity, 1 Kings 10:6-7, "Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true! I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom and prosperity are far greater than what I was told!"

Just so—it is not the one half which Christ's disciples now hear, or can in this world discern, of their Master's excellencies! It has not now entered into their hearts to conceive what beauties, and glories, and most admirable perfections there are hidden in their Beloved! Not only Christ's *love*—but also Christ's *loveliness* surpasses their knowledge! There are such dimensions of most wonderful glory in Christ's person as infinitely transcend the capacity of the most elevated minds fully to comprehend. Christ manifests Himself *truly* to those who love Him—yet is it but *partly*, and that but a *little* part. It is but darkly, by the beams of a more obscure light, "For we know in *part* and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." 1 Corinthians 13:9-12

We ministers *prophecy* but in part. We can tell you but a little part of what there really is in Christ; and both we and you *know* but in part. Our conceptions of Christ's excellencies and our expressions now are childish; hereafter, there will be a perfect manifestation of Christ, and then all imperfections of knowledge will be removed. Now you may see Christ—but it is through a glass darkly; hereafter, face to face. Indeed, it is said, 2 Corinthians 3:18, "We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed!" There is a comparative open discovery of Christ now in *gospel-times* over what there was under the *law*; the veil of types and figures which covered and, in a great measure, hid Christ from the view is now removed. Our face is now open from that veil—but Christ's face is not fully open. There is a looking-glass still between our eye and Christ's face (the looking-glass of ordinances which, though it helps us to see Him—yet it keeps us from the *clearest* discovery of Him). We see but through a glass darkly; our eyes now need this looking-glass to help our weakness, and that we may see what we do see. There is a time coming when we shall be above the need and use of the ordinance glasses, I mean, when we shall see Christ face to face, and know Him in heaven as we are known by Him!

**(2) Christ now manifests Himself GRADUALLY unto those who love Him.** Christ does not show at once and altogether what He means to reveal of Himself and His love—but He does it by degrees; a little at one time and a little at another time—a little in this ordinance and little in that. Now He lets down some comfortable beams of the light of His countenance into the soul; by and by, clouds arise and obscure this light and darkness is upon the spirit. Sometimes, Christ opens the curtain, looks upon the soul, and gives gracious smiles; by and by, the curtain is drawn and His face is hid. Now He appears and then He disappears; He manifests Himself at one time, withdraws Himself at another time; and so leads His people on from one revelation of Himself unto another, until He brings them at last unto the full discovery of Himself in glory!

**(3) Christ manifests Himself most SWEETLY unto those who love Him**, especially after long absence. When the soul has been seeking and cannot find Him, wandering in the wilderness under amazing fears, perplexing doubts, doleful despondencies, sinking and heart-overwhelming grief, after a black night of deep desertion, Oh, how sweet is the day spring from on high! Oh how comfortable are the bright beams of the morning light, when He shines upon their dark, despised, and sorrowful spirits; giving them to know assuredly that they are the dearly beloved of His soul, that He has not forgotten them, that He will not forsake them, that He has a more tender love unto them than the mother to her nursing child! Oh the ravishments of spirit! Oh the transports of soul which arise from hence! Oh the songs which are then in their mouths! “This is our Beloved, we have waited for Him! This is our dear Redeemer, we have trusted in Him!”

Tongue cannot express the delight, the joy, and gladness of heart, which arises from the manifestation of Christ’s presence and love; the joy of harvest, the joy of the bridegroom on the wedding day, the joy of victory and taking great spoils from an enemy, the joy of a poor man in finding great treasures, and the greatest delight which ever was found in the sweetest sensual enjoyment—is not worthy to be compared with the joys and exaltings of heart, in the manifestation of Christ unto the soul!

#### 4. WHEN does Christ manifest Himself unto those who love Him?

(1) Sometimes Christ **quickly** manifests Himself after a little seeking. Some young converts have early and soon revelations of Christ and His love; they are cast down for a little while, and Christ soon comes unto them and lifts them up again. Weeping endures but for a night, and joy comes early in the morning. They have the spirit of *bondage*, which awakens them to fear; by and by the Spirit of *adoption* graciously visits them, and makes discovery of their relation to the Father, the love of their Savior, and sheds abroad the sense of His love into their hearts.

(2) Sometimes Christ is **long** before He manifests Himself. It is long before some seek Christ, and it is long before such find Him. Christ waits long to be gracious unto them, and Christ often makes them wait long before He manifests to them His loving-kindness; yes, sometimes, early seekers are no early finders. Christ makes some wait a long time to try their *faith* and *patience*, their *love* and *obedience*—so that He may prepare them for more than ordinary comforts and sweetness which He intends to give, in the revealing of Himself unto them.

(3) Sometimes Christ **suddenly** manifests Himself unto those who love Him, Song of Solomon 6:12, “Before I realized it, I found myself in my princely bed with my beloved on!” Before ever they are aware, the Lord Jesus comes unto them in the chariots of salvation, with such glory and luster as transports and amazes them.

Some Christians who truly love Christ have sought Him in this ordinance and have not found Him; and they have sought Christ in that ordinance and have not found Him. They have been looking, waiting, and hoping that at this time Christ would reveal Himself, or at that time He would reveal Himself—and still He has hid Himself; still they have come off with disappointment. This has been their grief, this they have complained of before God, and they have been under fears lest they should never see Him, never meet with Him at all. Hereupon their spirits have been ready to fail and sink within them and, in discouragement, they have been ready to say or think that all their labor would be in vain; and yet they have resolved to seek Him to their death. And, though He should kill them, to put their trust in Him. And, behold, all of a sudden, when they have had the least expectation, and they have been ready to give up their hope—they have met with Christ and found Him whom their soul loves! All of a sudden, the veil of the temple has been rent—and they have seen their Beloved in the Holy of Holies! All of a sudden the clouds have fled, their darkness has passed away—and the light has shone! The chill north-wind of trouble has ceased, and the sweet warm southern gales have blown upon them. I mean, they have been under such shinings and breathings of the Spirit, that they have seen and felt the presence of Christ, and such a sweet sense of His love as has filled them with soul-ravishing joy!

(4) Christ manifests Himself **seasonably** unto those who love Him. Though He does not always manifest Himself when they most desire—yet He manifests Himself when they have most need; and then they have most need when they are most low, when they are most low in their spirits, most poor in their own esteem, as well as most low in their condition through affliction and trouble. Humility and patience under affliction, makes way for the experience of Christ’s manifestation. Christ, many times, reserves His cordials for the fainting fits, and the sweetest consolations in the discoveries of His love for the time of the greatest adversity; especially when the trouble is for His sake, He is graciously present. John had

his *visions* and *revelations* of Christ—when He was banished for the sake of Christ unto the isle Patmos. And when all men forsook Paul—then the Lord came to him, stood by him, and strengthened him!

## 5. WHERE does Christ manifest Himself unto those who love Him?

This is in the way of His ordinances; there He walks, there He appears unto His people. Sometimes Christ manifests Himself in the way of private ordinances, when they seek Him in their families or in their closets, when they speak of Him in conference, or when they think of Him in their meditation and contemplation.

Sometimes Christ manifests Himself unto those who love Him in the way of public ordinances, in public prayer or fasting, in hearing the Word, or when they are feasting at His table. Especially in this last-mentioned ordinance, Christ frequently manifests Himself unto His disciples most sweetly. At the Lord's table, the Lord appears; in breaking bread, He reveals Himself, as to the disciples that went to Emmaus. In His banqueting house, He gives them to feast on His love. There are many who can say by experience that, if ever they meet with Christ in their lives, and in any ordinance, they have met with Him at the sacrament. There He has unveiled His face, there He has revealed His love, there He has breathed upon them by His Spirit, there they have found and felt the Lord to be near.

### I come now to the APPLICATION;

and here, that I may give to everyone his portion, I shall speak:

- (1) to you who have *no* love unto Christ;
- (2) to you who have *some* love to Christ but are without these manifestations;
- (3) to you who both love Christ and have *manifestations* of His love unto you.

**USE 1.** The first use concerns such as have no love at all unto Christ. Christ will manifest Himself unto those who love Him. This is children's bread and does not belong to you, because you do not belong to Christ. This is a choice and most rich privilege—but you have nothing to do with it. Avaunt, all you *profane* ones, all you *unclean* ones, all you *ungodly* ones, all *unbelievers* who, being without faith, are also without love to Christ. See that you do not come near to lay your unclean hands upon this most excellent promise! Never look for any discovery of Christ's love unto you—while you go on in ways of sin, while you are in your natural unconverted estate.

I believe some of you may be ready to say, “What if Christ does not manifest Himself unto us? Let us have our honors and dignity, let us have our wealth and plenty, let us have our friends and delights—and let who will, look after those airy and fanciful satisfactions in Christ's manifestation.”

Sinners, is this your language either of tongue or heart? Let me tell you, one day you will sing another tune; you will be of another mind. One day you will acknowledge that all the happiness which you so eagerly pursued in the sweetest creature enjoyments, was but a dream! that it was thin, light, and airy; that it was vain and empty. When all has fled away and left nothing behind but stings and bitter grief—but inward wounds, gripes, and dreads upon the sight

of approaching *death*, and under apprehensions of approaching *wrath* and eternal torments in hell—then what would you give for a saving interest in Jesus Christ, and a well-grounded persuasion of His special love unto your souls! Then the manifestations of Christ will appear to be no airy thing, and that nothing besides this can rationally support your souls when you come to the borders of the grave, and to the confines of eternity.

And let me further tell you, who have no love to Christ, that although Christ, while you are such, will never manifest Himself unto you in a way of *love*—yet there is a day coming when He will manifest Himself unto you. But this manifestation will be with a *vengeance*; it will be in a way of most furious anger, I mean, at the last day of judgment, when Christ will be revealed from heaven not only to those who *love* Him—but also to those who *hate* Him! For every eye shall then see Him, and He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon you who have not obeyed this gospel precept to love Him.

The consideration of this should awaken you to fear, and to fly from sin which, otherwise, will be your ruin and eternal perdition! And O that, withal, you would be persuaded to apply yourselves unto the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, that you may hereby have a saving interest in Him and in that great salvation which He has purchased for you, and which, in the gospel, is freely offered unto you! And this faith in Christ, would work love to Christ, and put you in a capacity of these manifestations of Christ's love unto your souls.

**USE 2.** The second use concerns such of you as have *some* love unto Christ—but are without these manifestations. There are two sorts of such:

- (1) some of you never had these manifestations;
- (2) some of you have had these manifestations but have lost them.

**(1) Some of you never had these manifestations of Christ's love.** It may be that you are young Christians. A little while ago, you were prime scholars in the school of the devil, and served divers lusts with all your might and strength. The Lord has recently hedged up your way with thorns, has opened your eyes to see your sins and made you sensible of your danger; but, as yet, your eyes are not open as to any comfortable sight of your Savior. Indeed, Christ has been revealed unto you. You have been drawn by the Word and Spirit to take hold on Him, and to give up yourselves unto Him; but, as yet, you are in the dark as to your spiritual estate. You are under doubts and fears of unsoundness and rottenness at heart—and think that you are hypocrites and shall fall away, as other professors like yourselves have done. You fear you shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. that the devil and your own lusts will be too hard for you, and prevail so far with you as to pull you back into ways of sin and, thereby, to pull you down into the bottomless pit of hell. This causes a dread upon your spirits, and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath and future vengeance. This fetches many a sad and heavy sigh from your breasts, many a brinish tear from your eyes.

You are troubled, bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the day; yet you are resolved to give your attendance still unto ordinances, and there to wait upon the Lord and for the Lord. You are resolved, notwithstanding all discouragements, that you will be the Lord's, though you know not whether He is yours. You are resolved that Christ shall have your hearts, and you will venture your souls upon Him, though you know not whether you are accepted by Him.

This may be a use of encouragement unto you. Certainly you are such as love Christ, and are beloved by Christ, and Christ will manifest Himself unto such as have such love. Let me tell you that Christ is not far from you, whatever you may apprehend. Though He is out of your

sight—yet you are not out of His. His *eye* is upon you, and His *heart* is towards you. He hears all your sighs, He sees all your tears; He pities you and sympathizes with you in all your griefs. He loves you and, before long, will let you know it.

He is now preparing you for sweet discoveries of Himself and, before long, He will give you those discoveries. If you follow on to seek Him, He will, *certainly*, and may *suddenly*, be found by you; and who knows but this may be the time of Christ's manifesting His love! It may be while you are reading this discourse, you may have a glimpse of His face and hear His voice saying unto you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" Lift up the hands that hang down; lift up the heart that is cast down. Look up, then, dejected soul; your Savior is before you! Open your eyes and look, look with the *eye of faith*. Can you not see a marvelous beauty in His countenance? Do you not perceive some smiles in His face, some smiles upon your soul? Do you not feel His Spirit sweetly breathing upon your heart, persuading you, and giving you a sweet sense of Christ's special love unto you? Do you not perceive some inward knockings at the door of your heart, and hear some inward callings? "Open to Me, and I will come in and sup with you." This is the voice of your Beloved; make haste and open to Him. Open all the faculties of your soul; lift up the everlasting gates to this King of glory. Send forth the handmaids of your *desires* to invite the Lord in. Let your *faith* take hold on Him and usher Him into your soul; and then embrace Him in the arms of your dearest *love* and give Him such entertainment that He may abide with you forever!

**(2) There are others of you who have had some manifestations of Christ unto you formerly—but you have lost them.** Your Beloved has withdrawn Himself and is gone. You call and He gives no answer; you seek Him—but you cannot find Him. Time has been, when your Lord was present and gave you gracious visits frequently; many a secret smile you have seen in His face, many a comfortable word you have had from His mouth; many a love token you have

received at His hand. Time has been, when you had your evidences written out fair and clean, with the seal of the Spirit set unto them; and how exceedingly did you then rejoice in the sense of Christ's love! How did you feast yourselves upon His rich entertainment of gospel privileges which, through Him, you were invested with!

And O the admirings which then you had of free grace! O the sweet meltings of heart in repentance for sin! O the enlargements of desire which you had in your prayers! O the burnings of love to Christ which you have often felt in your bosoms! O the lively hopes which you had, and ineffable delight in hopes of the glory of God! But now there is a strange decay within you of grace, an alteration as if you were not the same men and women as you were before.

You have withdrawn yourselves from Christ—and He has withdrawn Himself from your souls! You have let down your watch—and the devil has gotten advantage against you by his devices. He has watched his opportunity and entangled you in the snares of some sins. While you have heedlessly gone to the utmost confines of duty, and been upon the borders of sin, the devil has sent forth a squadron of temptations not with *fiery darts*—but with *silken cords*, which have parleyed with you, and enticed and persuaded you to go a little further. They have told you what pleasant fruit grows within those borders, most sweet and delicious to the taste; that there are silver and gold mines which you might quickly dig up and find precious substance; that there you might have honor and esteem. And, what, would you turn your back upon all these? Would you be so strict as not to dispense with a little duty, as not to step over the hedge a little way, where the delights and advantages would be so great? And if you have hesitated, they have told you that it was very disputable, whether the confines of duty did not reach beyond the place which they would bring you unto; propounding the example of others of the same religious profession, who have frequently gone so far—so why should you scruple?

Or if it were a transgression, it was but a *little* transgression. They would not desire you to go far; and who is there that lives—and does not transgress those bounds? And you might easily repent and find mercy if God were offended; you might quickly retire and return into your former limits. Then, while you have been parleying with temptations, the *silken cords* have been fastened about you and, before you have been aware—you have been drawn along, partly willing and partly unwilling—and enticed unto some kind of sins, and complied with some kind of lusts; indulging yourselves to give them satisfaction; whereby you have been beguiled, and befooled, whereby you have been secretly wounded and inwardly defiled. And thus your evidences for heaven have been secretly wounded and inwardly defiled; and thus your evidences for heaven have been miserably blotted so that now you are not able to read them!

Time has been, when worldly affections seemed to be mortified within you--to be dead and buried. Many a sore thrust and wound you had given unto them--and how they bled, and fainted, and grew so weak--that they seemed to be dying, and you have thought surely they would never stir much in you any more. Then your love to Christ was strong and active--it burned and flamed within you! And O the zeal which you then had for your Master's honor!

But now--your affections to Christ are strangely cooled! If there is the fire of love to Christ still within you--it is not fire in burning coals, or in a vehement flame—but it is a fire in a few scattered sparks, which give neither light nor heat, and are hardly, if at all, discernable by you! Your worldly affections, which seemed to be dead--have gotten life, and vigor, and strength. O the eager desire which you now have after the world and the things in the world! Now the world has your thoughts in plans about it; and the world has your tongues in your frequent discourse of it. Now the world has your hand and your time—but that which is worst of all--is that the world has your heart too! The world has jostled Christ off His throne! And is it then a wonder--if your Beloved is offended, because your hearts have gone a-whoring from Him, unto the world! "I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love!" Revelation 2:4

Hence it is that Christ has shut up His smiling countenance from you, or if He looks, it is with *frowns* upon you. You have lost your first love, and you have lost your first sights and your first tastes of the love of Christ. Now your spiritual joys and comforts are fled out of sight; they are lost and gone, and the bare remembrance of them only remains; and whatever delights you have, they are only such as come in at the door of *sense*. You have none at all that come in at the door of *faith*; and your sensual delights have expelled and banished your spiritual delights. Now the rich gospel privileges do not have that savor and sweet relish with you, as before. Your minding and savoring so much the earth and earthly things, has disrelished your spiritual appetite. O the mischief which *indulged sin* has done unto you! O the deep and dangerous wounds which sin has given you! O the defilements of sin in your consciences, and the stains and blots which sin has cast upon your profession! O the havoc which sin has made among your graces, and among your spiritual comforts! You have still *leaves* of an outward profession—but where is your fruit? If you have some fruit, is it not *withered* and *sour* fruit—

not such ripe and mellow and sweet fruit, as heretofore in your flourishing estate! Surely the Lord is at a great distance from such of you, and are there not too many such among you?

And what need have you to remember whence you are fallen, to ransack your hearts to find out your sins, to humble yourselves deeply, to repent, and grieve, and mourn; to turn your laughter into weeping and your joy into heaviness, and to return unto the Lord speedily and do your first works! Otherwise, some fatal judgments are likely to befall you, and the Lord may be even forced to awaken you with a vengeance, and make you a terror unto yourselves and unto all about you.

Do not provoke the Lord by your thus running away from Him—to follow you with a storm as He did Jonah, and to devour you in the floods and waves of dreadful afflictions that hereby He may reduce and restore you, and keep you from being drowned in utter perdition and eternal destruction! It may be the Lord has scourged some of you for your faults—with the rods of some crosses and disappointments, some outward losses and troubles. It may be that He has put bitterness upon those *breasts* which you have been sucking, and mingling gall in the *cup* of your pleasures which you have been drinking; and you have begun to think of your evil ways, and seen what an evil and a bitter thing it is to backslide from the Lord—and you have thought it was best with you when you were nearest unto Christ!

It may be that God has dealt with you as He tells His backsliding people He would do with them, Hosea 2:6-7, “Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say—I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now!” And now you are seeking after your Beloved—but He has withdrawn Himself from you, and seems to take no notice of you. You call, and cry, and sigh, and weep, and lament, and complain, and seek, and wait—and yet He withholds from you all special discoveries of His love! Possible doubts may hence arise, and fears grow upon your hearts, and you are ready to sink and sometimes are almost overwhelmed with inward trouble.

Let this doctrine be an encouragement to you still to seek diligently and wait patiently—for the Lord will manifest Himself again unto you in His *own* time, which is the *best* time. He may try you for awhile whether you will follow Him in the *dark*. He may allow you to wait *some* time for Him, who have made Him to wait so *long* a time for you; but if you persevere to seek Him diligently in His ways, you shall find that it will not be in vain.

And what would you say, you backsliding souls—if the Lord should manifest Himself unto you at this time? Would you not abuse His kindness if He should reveal His love to you again? Would you not grow wanton and carnally secure—if He should now renew your evidences, and give them fair written and easy to be read by you? Would you not blot them again by your sins!

If He should now speak peace unto your consciences—would you not again return unto folly? If He should now restore unto you the joys of His salvation and send down the Holy Spirit from heaven unto you to be your Comforter and to dwell with you, would you not grieve and quench the Spirit, and provoke Him to another retirement, and more dreadful withdrawals than before! It may be, that the Lord will try you; it may be that the Lord will draw near and make some disclosure of Himself, and disclosure of His love unto you. It may be that the Lord may look kindly now upon you, and secretly, by His Spirit, speak kindly unto you.

You are now looking, and longing, and hoping, and waiting. Possibly this may be the time of your seeing His face and the smiles that are there; of your feeling the sweet sheddings abroad of His love into your hearts by His Spirit. At least, He may give you a *glimpse*, a *glance*, a little *taste*—such as shall ravish your hearts! However, wait for Him and, with earnest desires and importunate requests, plead with Him for His returns, and these manifestations, and that in such kind of language as this, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Make haste, O my Beloved! Make haste to my soul that thirsts for You as the parched land thirsts after the sweet showers; as the wounded deer thirsts after the cooling and refreshing streams of the water brooks!”

“O when shall I drink of those waters of life which You have to give, who are the fountain and spring from whence they flow! When shall I taste again how good You are? When shall I see You again, and feed, and feast my soul again with Your love! When, Lord, O when will You come unto me? Will You cast me off forever? Will You be favorable no more? Have You in anger shut up Your affections? Shall this *cloud* always sit upon Your brow? Shall this *curtain* always be drawn before Your face? Truly, Lord, I have grievously sinned, and greatly offended You; but do I not truly repent? Is there anything in the world so grievous unto me as the remembrance of my sins against You? I acknowledge my offense,



my folly, and horrid ingratitude; but shall my sins be always a wall of separation between me and my Beloved? Are not Your affections tender? Are not Your mercies plentiful? Is there not forgiveness with You that You may be feared, and the more dearly beloved? Do You not forgive freely, without upbraiding? Have You not promised to be found by all those who diligently seek You? And did You ever fail in Your word unto any? And shall I be the first?"

"Are not the desires of my soul after You, and that chiefly, and that earnestly? Is there not dearth and drought—in all things beneath Yourself? There is nothing else which can give me satisfaction! Have I not renounced the world as my portion? You might send me to the world for help and comfort, to the world which I have over earnestly desired and loved, and over-eagerly sought for contentment and happiness in—but is this Your accustomed way, and the manner of Your dealing with those who are grieved for their sin, and ashamed for their folly? Have You not promised to manifest Yourself unto those who love You? And do not I love You? You know all things—You know that I love You! Though my love is imperfect—yet it is true! Though it is weak—yet it is sincere! Else whence are those desires after You, above all people and things in the world? Are not these the product of true love? And will You not make good Your promise, then, to manifest Yourself unto me? And if I had the manifestations of Your love, would not my love grow and increase hereby? Should I not love You more dearly and strongly, if I had clear discoveries, and were persuaded assuredly of Your love unto me?"

"True, Lord, I am altogether unworthy of such a favor; but did You ever bestow this favor upon any—for their deserts? Are not all Your gifts free? And am not I as capable as any—of free grace? The more unworthy, the more I shall admire You; the more is forgiven, I shall love You more. And may I not now have a taste of Your loving-kindness? Hasten, my Beloved! O hasten unto me! And be as a deer upon the mountains of spices! Do not veil Your face from me any longer! Do not conceal Your love! O now, draw near, and make me exceeding glad in the light of Your countenance, and in the beauty of Your face, and Your loving smiles!"

Such desires and pleadings as these might prevail with the Lord to return again unto you, and say, "My dear child, I have heard your prayer, your breathing, and your cry. Your pleadings have prevailed with Me, and I am now come unto you; and be it to you according to your desires. Come, child, and look up; lift up your eyes and see. Here I am; behold Me, behold Me! This day I am come to bring glad tidings of great joy unto you. I assure you that I am yours—and you are Mine, and shall be Mine forever!" And what words can sound so sweet and yield such comfort as those, or such like, spoken by the Spirit unto the hearts of those from whom Christ is withdrawn?

**USE 3.** The third use concerns you who *do* love Christ, and have the manifestations of His love to your souls. Three things be exhorted unto:

- (1) rejoice in the Lord;
- (2) admire His free grace;
- (3) labor to retain these manifestations of the love of Christ.

**1. Rejoice in the Lord.** Of all people in the world, you have most reason to rejoice. You are the happiest men and women alive. It is not *wealth in the greatest abundance*—which can make men happy. The richest people have often *thorns* of the greatest *discontent* to pierce their hearts; and *stings* of the greatest *guilt* to wound their consciences! It is not the *highest honor and worldly dignity*—which can make men happy. The vilest men are often exalted, and those who are in the highest places are in the most slippery places, from whence they are soon cast down into destruction; and, whatever security they have in life—yet they are usually consumed utterly with terrors when *grim death* appears and summons them to depart. It is not the *sweetest sensual delight*—which can make men happy. *Vanity* is the attendant, and *vexation of mind* is the consequence, of all those pleasures which are sensual and sinful, which are the seed also of everlasting torment.

Such only can be said to be happy in truth, as are really united and related unto Jesus Christ, and through Him reconciled unto God, and entitled by Him unto the kingdom of heaven! But you are the most happy, and have reason to take the most comfort—who have not only *relation* unto Christ—but also the *manifestations* of Him; who know that Christ is yours, and you are His; that Christ loves you, and that His love, as it had no beginning, so it is without changing and will know no ending!

If you know that Christ loves you, you have reason to rejoice because, hereby, you may know assuredly that you are elected; that God, by an eternal and unchangeable decree, has chosen you, when He has chosen so few of fallen *men*—and none of the fallen *angels*, and when there was no good thing in the least in you—to induce Him hereunto. The assurance of this may yield inexpressible sweetness unto you. If you know that Christ loves you, you may know assuredly your effectual calling, conversion, and wonderful union unto Christ; and O what matter of joy is it—to think how God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light! How He has delivered you out of the snare of the devil and the bondage of your own lusts. Set your souls at liberty! How He has wrought a miracle in your first resurrection from the grave and spiritual death of sin, and has put forth His almighty power in your new creation! How He has dissolved and made a divorce between your hearts and your sins, and so wonderfully united and espoused you unto the Lord Jesus; and by this relation, given you a saving interest in all the privileges which Christ has purchased!

If you know that Christ loves you, you may know assuredly that you are justified through His merits and mediation; and O what matter of joy is this—to think that all your sins, original and actual, are pardoned! That none can lay any sin to your charge because God has justified you! That there is none who can condemn you—because Christ has loved you and, out of love, has died for you and is now making intercession for you at the right hand of God! Romans 8:33-34. To be acquitted from all guilt—and no more liable unto future wrath than if you had never offended; and, when you had no righteousness of your own—to be accepted as perfectly righteous in the sight of God through the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness!

If you know that Christ loves you, you may assuredly say that you are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. And will you not rejoice—when, from children of the devil, children of disobedience, you were made children of God—the children of the glorious Jehovah who is the supreme Sovereign and King of the whole world! Will you not rejoice, when you are entitled to all the privileges of His children?

“Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end!” John 13:1. If you know that Christ loves you, you may know assuredly that He will keep alive His interest in you, preserve His grace in your hearts, and enable you to persevere in faith and holiness; notwithstanding all the alluring temptations which you may meet with in the world, notwithstanding all the oppositions of Satan, and notwithstanding all the powerful workings of your remaining lusts and corruptions; all which combine together and use all their power and policy (which is great) to extirpate your grace, to draw you unto sin, to entice or force you out of the ways of God! And O what matter of comfort is it—that the Lord Jesus, who loves you, has undertaken for you to keep you in His hand and, by His unseen but mighty power, to enable you to resist and overcome, to persevere in His ways, and hold out unto the end—so that you may triumph with the Apostle and say, as Romans 8:35-37, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!” And you may be persuaded, as Paul was, and greatly rejoice therein, that, as verses 38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!”

If you know that Christ loves you, you may know assuredly that your **prayers** have an audience with God; that whatever imperfections and sinful mixtures they have—yet they are mingled with the sweet incense of Christ’s merits through which they are perfumed and accepted. And what comfort this is that whatever you ask of the Father in the name of your dear Lord Jesus, if it is for His glory and your good, He will certainly procure it for you.

To conclude, if you know that Christ loves you—you may know assuredly that you are heirs of the kingdom of **heaven**, and that, as certainly as you are alive, you shall attain eternal felicity in the beatific vision and fruition of your Lord! As certainly as you have the *first fruits*—so certainly shall you have the *harvest*. As certainly as you have the *pledge*—so certainly shall you have the *inheritance*. As certainly as you see Christ by faith here—so certainly shall you have the beatific vision of His person and glory in heaven, and be made perfectly happy in the eternal and full enjoyment of Him. O how should you then rejoice in the Lord! Rejoice in His person, rejoice in His love, rejoice in His benefits; rejoice in what you have, and rejoice in what you hope to have by Him; rejoice in what you see now, and feel now, and taste now; and rejoice in the foresights and foretaste of your happiness to come! Rejoice in the Lord, always, and, again I say, Rejoice!

**2. If you have manifestations of Christ’s love unto you, admire His free grace in these manifestations!** John 14:22. When Christ had promised to manifest Himself unto such as love Him, one asked Him, “Lord, how is it You’re going to

reveal Yourself to us—and not to the world?” This question is not a question of inquiry concerning the way and manner how Christ would manifest Himself unto them—but it as a question of admiration concerning the thing. What is done, or what is come to pass? How is it? Or whence is it?

His question did not expect an answer, neither do we find any to it. but only expressed his wonder that Christ should manifest Himself unto them. And how should you wonder, then, that the Lord Jesus should manifest Himself unto you! That the Lord Jesus, whose name is Wonderful, and has so many wonders in Him; a person of so great eminence and excellence; who has such a crown of glory upon His head, such robes of glory upon His back, and on the vesture of His garment and His thigh, a name written, ‘King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!’ That this most excellent person should manifest Himself unto *you*—when He conceals Himself from the greatest princes of the earth who, by their wealth, authority, and influence, might highly promote His glory! That He should manifest Himself unto you who, for the most part, are poor and despised in the world; that, when He hides Himself from most of the wise and prudent, and great scholars in the world who, by their abilities and learning, might magnify His name, and spread His fame; that He should manifest Himself unto you who, for the most part, are people of low abilities and education? That, when Christ hides Himself from many *moralists*, who have escaped the grosser pollutions which are in the world—He should reveal and manifest Himself unto you, some of whom, before conversion, were notoriously guilty of the most foul sins! That when Christ manifests Himself unto so few—that **you** should be in the number of those few!

How many wonders are here! That this glorious person should send down another glorious person—the Holy Spirit, from heaven (which is more than if He had sent down all the glorious angels which are in heaven) to make this revelation of Himself unto you! That He should make use of the *foolishness of preaching* as a means to effect this great thing! That, while a man of like passions and infirmities with yourselves is opening and applying the Scriptures, the Lord, by this means, should unveil Himself and open the *treasures of His love* unto you! That your humble, fervent, and believing *prayers* here on earth should ascend up to the throne of God that is in heaven, and move the Lord Jesus who is there to come down thence, though not in person—yet by His Spirit! That prayer should *open heaven’s gate* and have such a prevalency for this manifestation and revealing of Christ, though the best prayers of the best men—are not without mixture of sin. That, while you are sitting at the Lord’s table, the Lord Himself should give you a visit and, while you are eating bread and wine at the sacrament, He should give you to see, and feel, and taste *Himself* and *His love* by your spiritual senses!

It was wonderful humiliation in Christ that, when He could have commanded the most stately horses, yes, lions, or elephants, that He should ride to Jerusalem upon a humble donkey! And when Christ has the chariots of so many thousand glorious angels, which He could command and ride triumphantly in, when He makes revelation of Himself unto His people, that He should make use of the chariots of so lowly ordinances in the revelation of Himself unto you. How many wonders are here!

How should you admire His wonderful grace and love, and say, “What is man, that You are thus mindful of him! Or any of the sons of men, that You should thus visit them! What are we—but unworthy wretches? And why should You manifest Yourself unto us? Even so, dear Jesus, because it seemed good in Your sight.” Especially, you have reason to wonder and admire at the manifestation which Christ has given of Himself and love to you, when you consider the excellency of these manifestations and revelations beyond all other good things. What is the sight of the most lovely objects that ever were visible to the eye of the body? The sight of all is but poor and contemptible, and not worthy to be named, in comparison with the sight of the Lord Jesus by the eye of the soul.

Whatever beauty and loveliness there is to be found in any, or in all visible creatures—there is infinitely more beauty and loveliness in Jesus Christ! All visible beauty is but a *shadow*; in Christ there is substantial beauty! All visible beauty is *fading* like the flower which soon withers, like the leaf which soon fades—but in Christ there is *permanent* beauty. All visible beauty is *inferior* and *base*—yes, *deformity*, when compared with Christ’s transcendent loveliness! There is no discovery to the eye of the *mind*, comparable to the discovery of Christ unto the eye of *faith*.

The light of nature, in the greatest improvement of it, is but a weak and dim light—in comparison with the spiritual light of the knowledge of Christ. No light is so clear and bright, no light so pure and sweet—as that which makes revelation of the Lord Jesus unto the soul. This *discovery of Christ*—dispels clouds from the mind, and exhales lusts from the heart! It brightens the understanding, and cleanses the affections! It warms the heart with love, and fills the heart with comfort! It quiets the conscience and purifies it! It gives a most sweet peace and tranquility to the spirit and, withal, brings in such

spiritual joy as is unspeakable and full of glory! O how, then, should you admire the riches of the grace and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ unto you! That He should give unto *you* this manifestation of Himself; when the manifestation is so admirable, so desirable, so useful, and which lifts you up into a far higher degree of excellence, than the most accomplished people in the world, who are without this revelation!

**3. To conclude, if you have these manifestations of Christ and His love unto you—labor to *retain* these manifestations.** In a word, take heed of indulging yourselves in any *sins* which may provoke Him to depart from you and withdraw the sweet and comfortable influences of His Spirit. Be diligent in the use of all *means* public, private, and secret—whereby you may maintain daily communion and fellowship with Him!