

"Christ pleased Not Himself."

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It has just struck me, that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did this. Nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of introducing Himself to their favour. He did not seek to please, and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself.

This was very blessed; and the same thing in any one is always a symptom of moral power.

"If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to please." This is true, I doubt not; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes a fellow-creature supreme; and we deal with him as though his favour was life to us, which God's is, but His only.

But to bind one in full confidence to us — to draw the heart — to have ourselves in the esteem and affection of others, without ever in one single instance having that as our object — this is morally great. For nothing can account for this, but that constant course of love which, by necessity of its own virtue, tells others that their real interests, and prosperity, and blessing are in deed and in truth the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And this was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to please them; but everything that He did told them that He sought to bless them.

And again I say — I believe that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself to their favour. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on many occasions which we might have resented. And both of these, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of a moral perfection which took their rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him to put Him to an effort to please, malice had no part in Him to make Him quick to resent. He could not be flattered into graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness. Look at Luke 22: 24-30. They had just betrayed nature, striving through pride about the highest place. He corrects this; but He does not hold that object long before Him, but allows another to command His heart and His thoughts respecting them — "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations."

Was that exactly the moment for remembering this fact? Was it just the time for looking at them so steadily in so favourable a light? No, not for nature to do so; but for Jesus it was just the time. And He is our example, that we should follow His steps, and partake of His mind. And after the pattern of this little occasion, we have to remember that it is not the present act that has to decide our thoughts and hearts respecting each other. It may have much of the vileness or working of nature in it, as this strife had; but it may be, as this strife was, the act of those in whom much of the preciousness of the Spirit dwells; and "the precious" should be remembered for the commanding of our thoughts often, even in the very presence of "the vile."

Strange this may appear. Yes, and the ways of divine unselfish love are strange. Here is our pilgrim part, and the part of a stranger in a scene of multiform selfishness like this. It may not be well to be always understood. Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren in a moment of their sorrow. But Joseph was not to be the servant of the present moment, but of their good. He was seeking to bless them, not to please them. Jesus told Thomas in a moment of repentance, that there was a character of still higher blessing to which he did not belong. But Jesus was true to the truth, true to us all, true to Thomas

himself, when he might have been flattered into softness. Like Joseph, He was serving Thomas, and not the moment or occasion.

O the perfectness of it all! O the unspottedness of the path of His spirit within, as of His feet abroad! O the beauty of all which love does or says! We shall understand it all bye-andbye, and have pages open to us which now we have no eyes to read. Through selfishness, we mistake the doings of love, and expect gratifications, when we find ourselves passed by; and are sent away with the material of some solid lasting benefit, when we hoped for a mere present pleasurable excitement.

O, for more of that love that is "in deed and in truth," which eyes the solid good of others, and can sacrifice their favour towards ourselves to their own blessing.