

## Thoughts From Other Minds:

*O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* A most affecting exhortation, showing clearly the deep love of the writer to his God: there is the more beauty in the expression, because it reveals love toward a smiting God, love which many waters could not quench. To bless him who gives is easy, but to cling to him who takes away is a work of grace. All the saints are benefited by the sanctified miseries of one, if they are led by earnest exhortations to love their Lord the better. If saints do not love the Lord, who will? Love is the universal debt of all the saved family: who would wish to be exonerated from its payment? Reasons for love are given, for believing love is not blind. *For the Lord preserveth the faithful.* They have to bide their time, but the recompense comes at last, and meanwhile all the cruel malice of their enemies cannot destroy them. *And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* This also is cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.

C H Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, Commentary on Psalm 31:23.

The exhortation and encouragement which he hereupon gives to all the saints ... He would have them set their love on God (v. 23): *O love the Lord! all you his saints.* Those that have their own hearts full of love to God cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints that they do love God; and yet they must still be called upon to love him, to love him more and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him, not only for his goodness, because he preserves the faithful, but for his justice, because he plentifully rewards the proud doer (who would ruin those whom he preserves), according to their pride. ...

Matthew Henry, Commentary on Psalm 31:23

Now he maketh farther use of his experience, in exhorting all the godly to follow his example, encouraging them yet with hope of like success. Whence learn, 1. The gracious dealings of God with believers should glue their hearts, and all the other saints' hearts that hear of it, unto God, in faith and love: *O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* He putteth love for faith, because it is inseparable from faith; and faith worketh by love, and love proveth the sincerity of faith. 2. The faithful man will not want an upholder, albeit he had no friends; *for the Lord preserveth the faithful.* 3. The proud man will never want a pursuer, and one to be avenged on him for his pride and oppression, though all the world should let him alone: *for the Lord plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.*

David Dickson, Commentary on Psalm 31:23

## Camperdown — Terang Presbyterian Church

4 January 2015

**Sermon:** "*Loving the Lord as His Saints*" (text: Psalm 31:23)

**Scripture:** Psalm 31:1-24

**Hymns:** (Rejoice!)

607 At your feet, our God and Father

544 Father although I cannot see

29 My God, how wonderful you are

487 Hark, hark, my soul!

### Sermon Notes

**Introduction:** In choosing what to preach I first pray, and then, trusting the Holy Spirit for guidance, I prepare. This year I decided I should preach from the psalms about our love as believers for the Lord. Then, having suitable texts, I decided to start with the one that is a command: 'Love the Lord, all you his saints!' (Ps 31:23).

Some say love can't be commanded—but God does not agree! Jesus said the first and great commandment is that we love God (Matt 22:37). And here the Holy Spirit gives the same command—and it would be a good New Year's resolution if we resolved to love the Lord more this year than we did last year!

#### 1. We should love the Lord because we who believe are his saints

We should love him because we are his, by creation; he made us in his image; he is love, and in love he has been good to us, and so we should love him. Even when our first parents did not love him enough to obey him, he didn't stop loving us (Acts 14:17). How great is our debt of love to him!

We ought also love him because we are 'his saints'. To most, 'saint' is a superhero, someone super in holiness—but in the Bible a saint is someone God has set apart for himself (saint=set apart). This is why the apostle Paul generally begins his letter 'to the saints' - even when they weren't particularly saintly—as in Corinth!

If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with that faith that bears in us godliness, growing like him, then these words 'Love the Lord, you his saints' are to us, and for us; we are to love him because he has made us his saints. To make us his saints he loved us with a costly love that deserves all the love we are capable of, and more.

Before creation, the Father gave the Son out of humanity as fallen some to be his (Jn 6:37-39; Heb 2:11-13). The Son, on his part, undertook to redeem 'the children' the Father had given him (Heb 2:14-15). For love of us the Father sent his beloved Son to die the death we deserve to die; the Son, for love of us, became the God-man, so he might be man, able to die for us, and God, able to save us.

For love of us, the Father did not spare the Son, but laid on him the iniquity of us all; the Son, for love of us, willingly offered himself through the Spirit (Heb 9:13-

14). In love the Father brought the gospel of salvation through faith to us with such power that we believed, and were saved (cf. 1 Thess 1:2-5, 3-10).

If such love doesn't make us want to love the Lord more than we love anything else, then we are not yet born of his Spirit. Do you love the Lord? Do you want to love him more? We can believe the truth, we can call ourselves Christians and belong to the church, but unless we love the Lord we are not his, and are not saved.

How blessed we would be if we resolved that this year our daily prayer would be that we might love him more: 'And yet I want to love thee, Lord; O light the flame within my heart, and I will love thee more and more, until I see thee as thou art.' (William Walsham How, *It is a thing most wonderful*).

## 2. We should love the Lord because he preserves the faithful

We ought also to love the Lord because 'he preserves the faithful'. David had been hard pressed by his enemies, and he had cried out to the Lord, and the Lord had heard him and preserved him (Ps. 31:21-22).

This psalm is David's cry for mercy at the time, written afterwards, interspersed with thanksgiving; his situation was desperate (vs. 1-5); he even despaired of life (v. 4—words Jesus used on the cross); but (vs. 6-8) the Lord heard and answered his prayer, and so he responds with glad thanksgiving.

David's prayer then continues (vs. 9-18) this time against enemies within; he was facing rebellion from some who did not share his faith in the Lord; they joined him against Saul, but in trouble their loyalty to him faltered (cf. also 1 Sam 30:6); again, the Lord heard him, and so he praises him for his great goodness (vs. 19-20, 21-22).

Only God knows what trouble 2015 will bring us—but we can know that if we are faithful to him, whatever happens he will preserve us, if not from troubles, then through them (1 Peter 1:5) —and then we will have all eternity to love him for it!

## 3. We should love the Lord because he will pay back the proud in full

Spurgeon puts this in a proper light when he comments: "'this also is a cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.' Pride made the devil; pride keeps people from repentance and faith and forgiveness from God.

Loving him who pays back the proud in full will help us love our enemies (Lk 6:27-28; Rom 12:17-21). Loving him will help us endure injustice for his sake (2 Thess 1:6-9). Our Father may permit us to suffer injustice—but he will pay back the proud in full for it. Let us be sure we are not among the proud.

You who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, abhor pride and cultivate humility (1 Peter 5:5-7) and resolve to love the Lord who made you his saint, who preserves the faithful, and who will pay back the proud in full. Write it down; read it often; pray over it, meditate on his great love to you, and grow in love for him.

## My Notes:

### Questions for Reflection:

1. Clearly, love can be commanded, because God commands us to love him; he also commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Are we able to obey these commands? If not, how can God hold us responsible for not loving?
2. What is the difference between the popular understanding of 'saint' and the Bible's teaching? How does the fact that every person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a 'saint' oblige him or her to love the Lord? (reflect on 1 John chapter 4).
3. What two reasons does David give (Ps 31:23) why 'his saints' should love the Lord?
4. How does David put his experience of the Lord's goodness in preserving him in a time of great danger and distress to good use for other believers? (Ps 31:23b). How might his experience encourage us to be faithful to the Lord throughout 2015?
5. In David's distress, who were the proud? (v. 18). Why does he exhort us to love the Lord because 'the proud he will pay back in full? How will loving the Lord for this reason help us 1. love our enemies instead of avenging ourselves; 2. endure injustice without losing faith in the Lord?