

A Divine Cordial Chapter V

Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson was of the group known as Non-conformist. His date of birth is unknown but it is known that he died at Barnston in 1686. He was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and in 1646 was appointed to preach at St Stephen's, Walbrook. He showed strong Presbyterian views during the civil war, with, however, an attachment for the king; because of his share in Love's plot to recall Charles II. He was imprisoned in 1651, but was released and reinstated vicar of St. Stephen's in 1652. He acquired fame as a preacher, but in 1662 was ejected at the Restoration. He continued to exercise his ministry privately. In 1672 after the declaration of indulgence he obtained a licence for Crosby Hall, where he preached for several years, until his retirement to Barnston upon the failure of his health. Watson was a man of learning, and acquired fame by his quaint devotional and expository writings. Of his many works may be mentioned, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653); *The Saint's Delight* (1657); *Jerusalem's Glory* (1661); *Divine Cordial* (1663); *The Godly Man's Picture* (1666); *The Holy Eucharist* (1668); *Heaven Taken by Storm* (1669); and *A Body of Practical Divinity; . . . One Hundred Seventy Six Sermons on the Lesser Catechism* (1692).

The Tests of Love to God

LET us test ourselves impartially whether we are in the number of those that love God. For the deciding of this, as our love will be best seen by the fruits of it, I shall lay down fourteen signs, or fruits, of love to God, and it concerns us to search carefully whether any of these fruits grow in our garden.

1. The first fruit of love is **the musing of the mind upon God**. He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God. "*When I awake, I am still with thee*" (Psalm cxxxix. 18). The thoughts are as travellers in the mind. David's thoughts kept heaven-road. I am still with Thee. God is the treasure, and where the treasure is, there is the heart. By this we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon? Can we say we are ravished with delight when we think on God? Have our thoughts got wings? Are they fled aloft? Do we contemplate Christ and glory? Oh, how far are they from being lovers of God, who scarcely ever think of God! "*God is not in all his thoughts*" (Psalm x. 4). A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God, unless with horror, as the prisoner thinks of the judge.

2. The next fruit of love is **desire of communion**. Love desires familiarity and intercourse. "*My heart and flesh crieth out for the living God*" (Psalm lxxxiv. 2). King

David being de-barred the house of God where was the tabernacle, the visible token of His presence, he breathes after God, and in a holy pathos of desire cries out for the living God. Lovers would be conversing together. If we love God we prize His ordinances, because there we meet with God. He speaks to us in His Word. and we speak to Him in prayer. By this let us examine our love to God. Do we desire intimacy of communion with God? Lovers cannot be long away from each other. Such as love God have a holy affection, they know not how to be from Him. They can bear the want of anything but God's presence. They can do without health and friends, they can be happy without a full table, but they cannot be happy without God. "*Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the grave*" (Psalm cxliii. 7). Lovers have their fainting-fits. David was ready to faint away and die, when he had not a sight of God. They who love God cannot be contented with having ordinances, unless they may enjoy God in them; that were to lick the glass, and not the honey.

What shall we say to those who can be all their lives long without God? They think God may be best spared; they complain they want health and trading, but not that they want God! Wicked men are not acquainted with God; and how can they love, who are not acquainted! Nay, which is worse, they do not desire to be acquainted with Him. "*They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*" (Job xxi. 14). Sinners shun acquaintance with God, they count His presence a burden; and are these lovers of God? Does that woman love her husband, who cannot endure to be in his presence?

3. Another fruit of love is **grief**. Where there is love to God, there is a grieving for our sins of unkindness against Him. A child which loves his father cannot but weep for offending him. The heart that burns in love melts in tears. Oh! that I should abuse the love of so dear a Saviour! Did not my Lord suffer enough upon the cross, but must I make Him suffer more? Shall I give Him more gall and vinegar to drink? How disloyal and disingenuous have I been! How have I grieved His Spirit, trampled upon His royal commands, slighted His blood! This opens a vein of godly sorrow, and makes the heart bleed afresh. "**Peter went out, and wept bitterly**" (Matt. xxvi. 75). When Peter thought how dearly Christ loved him; how he was taken up into the mount of transfiguration, where Christ showed him the glory of heaven in a vision; that he should deny Christ after he had received such signal love from Him, this broke his heart with grief: he went out, and wept bitterly.

By this let us test our love to God. Do we shed the tears of godly sorrow? Do we grieve for our unkindness against God, our abuse of mercy, our non-improvement of talents? How far are they from loving God, who sin daily, and their hearts never smite them! They have a sea of sin, and not a drop of sorrow. They are so far from being troubled that they make merry with their sins. "*When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest*" (Jer. xi. 15). Oh wretch! did Christ bleed for sin, and do you laugh at it? These are far from loving God. Does he love his friend that loves to do him an injury?

4. Another fruit of love is **magnanimity**. Love is valorous, it turns cowardice into

courage. Love will make one venture upon the greatest difficulties and hazards. The fearful hen will fly upon a dog or serpent to defend her young ones. Love infuses a spirit of gallantry and fortitude into a Christian. He that loves God will stand up in His cause, and be an advocate for Him. *"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"* (Acts iv. 20). He who is afraid to own Christ has but little love to Him. Nicodemus came sneaking to Christ by night (John iii. 2). He was fearful of being seen with Him in the day-time. Love casts out fear. As the sun expels fogs and vapours, so divine love in a great measure expels carnal fear. Does he love God that can hear His blessed truths spoken against and be silent? He who loves his friend will stand up for him, and vindicate him when he is reproached. Does Christ appear for us in heaven, and are we afraid to appear for Him on earth? Love animates a Christian; it fires his heart with zeal, and steels it with courage.

5. The fifth fruit of love is **sensitiveness**. If we love God, our hearts ache for the dishonour done to God by wicked men. To see, not only the banks of religion, but morality, broken down, and a flood of wickedness coming in; to see God's sabbaths profaned, His oaths violated, His name dishonoured; if there be any love to God in us, we shall lay these things to heart. Lot's righteous soul was *"vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked"* (2 Pet. ii. 7). The sins of Sodom were as so many spears to pierce his soul. How far are they from loving God, who are not at all affected with His dishonour? If they have but peace and trading, they lay nothing to heart. A man who is dead drunk, never minds nor is affected by it, though another be bleeding to death by him; so, many, being drunk with the wine of prosperity, when the honour of God is wounded and His truths lie a bleeding, are not affected by it. Did men love God, they would grieve to see His glory suffer, and religion itself become a martyr.

6. The sixth fruit of love is **hatred against sin**. Fire purges the dross from the metal. The fire of love purges out sin. *"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols!"* (Hos. xiv. 8). He that loves God will have nothing to do with sin, unless to give battle to it. Sin strikes not only at God's honour, but His being. Does he love his prince that harbours him who is a traitor to the crown? Is he a friend to God who loves that which God hates? The love of God and the love of sin cannot dwell together. The affections cannot be carried to two contraries at the same time. A man cannot love health and love poison too; so one cannot love God and sin too. He who has any secret sin in his heart allowed, is as far from loving God as heaven and earth are distant one from the other.

7. Another fruit of love is **crucifixion**. He who is a lover of God is dead to the world. *"I am crucified to the world"* (Gal. vi. 14). I am dead to the honours and pleasures of it. He who is in love with God is not much in love with anything else. The love of God, and ardent love of the world, are inconsistent. *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John ii. 15). Love to God swallows up all other love, as Moses' rod swallowed up the Egyptian rods. If a man could live in the sun, what a small point would all the earth be; so when a man's heart is raised above the world in the admiring and loving of God, how poor and slender are these things below! They seem as nothing

in his eye. It was a sign the early Christians loved God, because their property did not lie near their hearts; but they "*laid down their money at the apostles' feet*" (Acts iv. 35).

Test your love to God by this. What shall we think of such as have never enough of the world? They have the dropsy of covetousness, thirsting insatiably after riches: "*That pant after the dust of the earth*" (Amos ii. 7). Never talk of your love to Christ, says Ignatius, when you prefer the world before the Pearl of price; and are there not many such, who prize their gold above God? If they have a south-land, they care not for the water of life. They will sell Christ and a good conscience for money. Will God ever bestow heaven upon them who so basely undervalue Him, preferring glittering dust before the glorious Deity? What is there in the earth that we should so set our hearts upon it! Only the devil makes us look upon it through a magnifying glass. The world has no real intrinsic worth, it is but paint and deception.

8. The next fruit of love is **fear**. In the godly love and fear do kiss each other. There is a double fear arises from love.

(i.) A fear of displeasing. The spouse loves her husband, therefore will rather deny herself than displease him. The more we love God, the more fearful we are of grieving His Spirit. "*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Gen. xxxix. 9). When Eudoxia, the empress, threatened to banish Chrysostom; Tell her (said he) I fear nothing but sin. That is a blessed love which puts a Christian into a hot fit of zeal, and a cold fit of fear, making him shake and tremble, and not dare willingly to offend God.

(ii.) A fear mixed with jealousy. "*El's heart trembled for the ark*" (1 Sam. iv. 13). It is not said, his heart trembled for Hophni and Phinheas, his two sons, but his heart trembled for the ark, because if the ark were taken, then the glory was departed. He that loves God is full of fear lest it should go ill with the church. He fears lest profaneness (which is the plague of leprosy) should increase, lest popery get a footing, lest God should go from His people. The presence of God in His ordinances is the beauty and strength of a nation. So long as God's presence is with a people, so long they are safe; but the soul inflamed with love to God fears lest the visible tokens of God's presence should be removed.

By this touchstone let us test our love to God. Many fear lest peace and trading go, but not lest God and His gospel go. Are these lovers of God? He who loves God is more afraid of the loss of spiritual blessings than temporal. If the Sun of righteousness remove out of our horizon, what can follow but darkness? What comfort can an organ or anthem give if the gospel be gone? Is it not like the sound of a trumpet or a volley of shot at a funeral?

9. If we are lovers of God, **we love what God loves**.

(i.) We love God's Word. David esteemed the Word, for the sweetness of it, above honey (Psalm cxix. 103), and for the value of it, above gold (Psalm cxix. 72). The lines

of Scripture are richer than the mines of gold. Well may we love the Word; it is the load-star that directs us to heaven, it is the field in which the Pearl is hid. That man who does not love the Word, but thinks it too strict and could wish any part of the Bible torn out (as an adulterer did the seventh commandment), he has not the least spark of love in his heart.

(ii.) We love God's day. We do not only keep a sabbath, but love a sabbath. *"If thou call the sabbath a delight"* (Isa. lviii. 13). The sabbath is that which keeps up the face of religion amongst us; this day must be consecrated as glorious to the Lord. The house of God is the palace of the great King; on the sabbath God shows Himself there through the lattice. If we love God we prize His day above all other days. All the week would be dark if it were not for this day; on this day manna falls double. Now, if ever, heaven-gate stands open, and God comes down in a golden shower. This blessed day the Sun of righteousness rises upon the soul. How does a gracious heart prize that day which was made on purpose to enjoy God in.

(iii.) We love God's laws. A gracious soul is glad of the law because it checks his sinful excesses. The heart would be ready to run wild in sin if it had not some blessed restraints put upon it by the law of God. He that loves God loves His law — the law of repentance, the law of self-denial. Many say they love God but they hate His laws. *"Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us"* (Psa. ii. 3). God's precepts are compared to cords, they bind men to their good behaviour; but the wicked think these cords too tight, therefore they say, Let us break them. They pretend to love Christ as a Saviour, but hate Him as a King. Christ tells us of His yoke (Matt. xi. 29). Sinners would have Christ put a crown upon their head, but not a yoke upon their neck. He were a strange king that should rule without laws.

(iv.) We love God's picture, we love His image shining in the saints. *"He that loves Him that beget, loves him also that is begotten of him"* (1 John v. 1). It is possible to love a saint, yet not to love him as a saint; we may love him for something else, for his ingenuity, or because he is affable and bountiful. A beast loves a man, but not as he is a man, but because he feeds him, and gives him provender. But to love a saint as he is a saint, this is a sign of love to God. If we love a saint for his saintship, as having something of God in him, then we love him in these four cases.

(a) We love a saint, though he be poor. A man that loves gold, loves a piece of gold, though it be in a rag: so, though a saint be in rags, we love him, because there is something of Christ in him.

(b) We love a saint, though he has many personal failings. There is no perfection here. In some, rash anger prevails; in some, inconstancy; in some, too much love of the world. A saint in this life is like gold in the ore, much dross of infirmity cleaves to him, yet we love him for the grace that is in him. A saint is like a fair face with a scar: we love the beautiful face of holiness, though there be a scar in it. The best emerald has its blemishes, the brightest stars their twinklings, and the best of the saints have their

failings. You that cannot love another because of his infirmities. how would you have God love you?

(c) We love the saints though in some lesser things they differ from us. Perhaps another Christian has not so much light as you. and that may make him err in some things; will you presently unsaint him because he cannot come up to your light? Where there is union in fundamentals, there ought to be union in affections.

(d) We love the saints, though they are persecuted. We love precious metal, though it be in the furnace. St. Paul did bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. vi. 17). Those marks were, like the soldier's scars, honourable. We must love a saint as well in chains as in scarlet. If we love Christ, we love His persecuted members.

If this be love to God, when we love His image sparkling in the saints, oh then, how few lovers of God are to be found! Do they love God, who hate them that are like God? Do they love Christ's person, who are filled with a spirit of revenge against His people? How can that wife be said to love her husband, who tears his picture? Surely Judas and Julian are not yet dead, their spirit yet lives in the world. Who are guilty but the innocent! What greater crime than holiness, if the devil may be one of the grand jury! Wicked men seem to bear great reverence to the saints departed; they canonize dead saints, but persecute living. In vain do men stand up at the creed, and tell the world they believe in God, when they abominate one of the articles of the creed, namely, the communion of saints. Surely, there is not a greater sign of a man ripe for hell, than this, not only to lack grace, but to hate it.

10. Another blessed sign of love is, **to entertain good thoughts of God**. He that loves his friend construes what his friend does, in the best sense. "*Love thinketh no evil*" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). Malice interprets all in the worst sense; love interprets all in the best sense. It is an excellent commentator upon providence; it thinks no evil. He that loves God, has a good opinion of God; though He afflicts sharply, the soul takes all well. This is the language of a gracious spirit: "My God sees what a hard heart I have, therefore He drives in one wedge of affliction after another, to break my heart. He knows how full I am of bad humours, how sick of a pleurisy, therefore He lets blood, to save my life. This severe dispensation is either to mortify some corruption, or to exercise some grace. How good is God, that will not let me alone in my sins, but smites my body to save my soul!" Thus he that loves God takes everything in good part. Love puts a candid gloss upon all God's actions. You who are apt to murmur at God, as if He had dealt ill with you, be humbled for this; say thus with yourself, "If I loved God more, I should have better thoughts of God." It is Satan that makes us have good thoughts of ourselves, and hard thoughts of God. Love takes all in the fairest sense; it thinketh no evil.

11. Another fruit of love is **obedience**. "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*" (John xiv. 21). It is a vain thing to say we love Christ's person, if we slight His commands. Does that child love his father, who refuses to obey him? If we love God, we shall obey Him in those things which cross flesh and blood. (i.) In things difficult, and (ii.) In things dangerous.

(i.) In things difficult. As, in mortifying sin. There are some sins which are not only near to us as the garment, but dear to us as the eye. If we love God, we shall set ourselves against these, both in purpose and practice. Also, in forgiving our enemies. God commands us upon pain of death to forgive. "*Forgive one another*" (Ephes. iv. 32). This is hard; it is crossing the stream. We are apt to forget kindnesses, and remember injuries; but if we love God, we shall pass by offences. When we seriously consider how many talents God has forgiven us, how many affronts and provocations He has put up with at our hands; this makes us write after His copy, and endeavour rather to bury an injury than to retaliate it.

(ii.) In things dangerous. When God calls us to suffer for Him, we shall obey. Love made Christ suffer for us, love was the chain that fastened Him to the cross; so, if we love God, we shall be willing to suffer for Him. Love has a strange quality, it is the least suffering grace, and yet it is the most suffering grace. It is the least suffering grace in one sense; it will not suffer known sin to lie in the soul unrepented of, it will not suffer abuses and dishonours done to God; thus it is the least suffering grace. Yet it is the most suffering grace; it will suffer reproaches, bonds, and imprisonments, for Christ's sake. "*I am ready not only to be bound, but to die, for the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts xxi. 13). It is true that every Christian is not a martyr, but he has the spirit of martyrdom in him. He says as Paul, "I am ready to be bound": he has a disposition of mind to suffer, if God call. Love will carry men out above their own strength. Tertullian observes how much the heathen suffered for love to their country. If the spring-head of nature rises so high, surely grace will rise higher. If love to their country will make men suffer, much more should love to Christ. "Love endureth all things" (I Cor. xiii. 7). Basil speaks of a virgin condemned to the fire, who having her life and estate offered her if she would fall down to the idol, answered, "Let life and money go, welcome Christ." It was a noble and zealous speech of Ignatius, "Let me be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, if I may be God's pure wheat." How did divine affection carry the early saints above the love of life, and the fear of death! St. Stephen was stoned, St. Luke hanged on an olive-tree, St. Peter crucified at Jerusalem with his head downwards. These divine heroes were willing to suffer, rather than by their cowardice to make the name of God suffer. How did St. Paul prize his chain that he wore for Christ! He gloried in it. as a woman that is proud of her jewels, says Chrysostom. And holy Ignatius wore his fetters as a bracelet of diamonds. "Not accepting deliverance" (Heb. xi. 35). They refused to come out of prison on sinful terms, they preferred their innocency before their liberty.

By this let us test our love to God. Have we the spirit of martyrdom? Many say they love God, but how does it appear? They will not forego the least comfort, or undergo the least cross for His sake. If Jesus Christ should have said to us, "I love you well, you are dear to me, but I cannot suffer, I cannot lay down my life for you," we should have questioned His love very much; and may not Christ suspect us, when we pretend to love Him, and yet will endure nothing for Him?

12. He who loves God **will endeavour to make Him appear glorious in the eyes of others.** Such as are in love will be commending and setting forth the amiableness of those persons whom they love. If we love God, we shall spread abroad His

excellencies, that so we may raise His fame and esteem, and may induce others to fall in love with Him. Love cannot be silent; we shall be as so many trumpets, sounding forth the freeness of God's grace, the transcendency of His love, and the glory of His kingdom. Love is like fire : where it burns in the heart, it will break forth at the lips. It will be elegant in setting forth God's praise: love must have vent.

13. Another fruit of love is **to long for Christ's appearing**. "*Henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, and not for me only, but for them which love Christ's appearing*" (2 Tim. iv. 8). Love desires union; Aristotle gives the reason, because joy flows upon union. When our union with Christ is perfect in glory, then our joy will be full. He that loves Christ loves His appearing. Christ's appearing will be a happy appearing to the saints. His appearing now is very comforting, when He appears for us as an Advocate (Heb. ix. 24). But the other appearing will be infinitely more so, when He shall appear for us as our Husband. He will at that day bestow two jewels upon us. His love; a love so great and astonishing, that it is better felt than expressed. And His likeness. "*When he shall appear, we shall be like him*" (1 John iii. 2). And from both these, love and likeness, infinite joy will flow into the soul. No wonder then that he who loves Christ longs for His appearance. "*The Spirit and the bride say come; even so come, Lord Jesus*" (Rev. xxii. 17, 20). By this let us test our love to Christ. A wicked man who is self-condemned, is afraid of Christ's appearing, and wishes He would never appear; but such as love Christ, are joyful to think of His coming in the clouds. They shall then be delivered from all their sins and fears, they shall be acquitted before men and angels, and shall be for ever translated into the paradise of God.

14. **Love will make us stoop to the meanest offices**. Love is a humble grace, it does not walk abroad in state, it will creep upon its hands, it will stoop and submit to anything whereby it may be serviceable to Christ. As we see in Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, both of them honourable persons, yet one takes down Christ's body with his own hands, and the other embalms it with sweet odours. It might seem much for persons of their rank to be employed in that service, but love made them do it. If we love God, we shall not think any work too mean for us, by which we may be helpful to Christ's members. Love is not squeamish; it will visit the sick, relieve the poor, wash the saints' wounds. The mother that loves her child is not coy and nice; she will do those things for her child which others would scorn to do. He who loves God will humble himself to the meanest office of love to Christ and His members.

These are the fruits of love to God. Happy are they who can find these fruits so foreign to their natures, growing in their souls.

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