

Let us beware of judging according to the first blush, where the reality may prove to be otherwise: it is not righteous judgment. We should seek to judge things by a higher standard, and in the light of God. In these serious matters we are bound to be sure, and never to yield to suspicion. All judgment, if it be according to God, must proceed upon what is known and certain, not upon what is a surmise--too often the effect of an unfounded pretension to superior spirituality. We find the importance of this constantly; and, were our souls more simple about it, fewer mistakes would be made.

Christ has the first place where the heart is true; and next, "all the saints" become the object of our love. If there are two cases of persons in fault, and the one were a prime favourite, and the other but little liked, the latter is in imminent danger, I need hardly say, of going to the wall. My object of aversion would labour under a cloud which obscures the truth, no matter how evident it might be to the dispassionate; whereas, on the con-

trary, the favourite would derive that which outweighs the proofs of guilt from the unwillingness on the part of his friend to pronounce anything wrong about him. Both these feelings are thoroughly at issue, in such circumstances, with the mind of God. Indeed, both favouritism and prejudices are plainly condemned by His blessed word. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17.)

"Love unto all the saints" is enjoined because they are saints. To love them, because God has separated and brought them into an eternal relationship with Himself, is only true and Christian love to such. Our great difficulty always is that our thoughts, feelings, actions, should flow from this ground. Do not mistake me. I do not mean that it is wrong to have friends. Our Lord had. He loved John as He did not love the others, and there was a sense in which He loved them every one alike; as His saints, they were beyond comparison precious in His

sight. He might prize the faithfulness of some of His servants; He might have to encourage, reprove, correct all round; and we must leave room for all these things. There is the grand basis of love to all the saints; but it is clear we are not bound to open out matters of personal nature to every one because he is a saint. For example, saints are not always the wisest of men; and while we are not to disown their saintship, we are not bound to lay bare our difficulties, or to seek counsel in what may require ripe spiritual judgment from those who could render no help whatever in the case. Love there must be always.

W. Kelly in Lectures on Ephesians.

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## LOVE UNTO ALL THE SAINTS

In our epistle, then, we have these two prayers; the first of them introduced by the apostle, who says, "wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Now inasmuch as our love would bring in the thought of something on man's part that would give importance to us, although he is about to speak of love to the saints, he introduces the matter by "faith," because this throws us not so much on our love to Him as His love to us. "Wherefore," he says, "I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus," and then gives the consequence of this, "and your love unto all the saints." This is a very important word in judging of our love. We are all apt to form a circle even among the saints of God--to have those that we prefer, those that suit us best, whose thoughts, feelings, habits, are more or less the same as our own, or at least, are no great trial to us. But,

then, this is not love to the saints. There is more love to ourselves in it than loving them. The flesh likes what is agreeable to us--what does not cause us pain, what is, perhaps, a gratification to the amiabilities of nature. All that may be where there is really no exercise of the new nature, no mighty power of the Spirit of God working in our hearts. We have always to test our souls, and ask how we stand in this. Is the prominent motive and object of our hearts to the Lord Jesus? Is it with Him and for Him that we think of and feel towards all the saints?

I fully admit that love towards the saints cannot, and ought not, to take the same shape towards all. It must be in the energy and intelligence of the Spirit, varied according to the call upon love. While one ought to love even a person who is under discipline, it would be a very great mistake to suppose that your love must be shown in the same way as if he were not. You do not cease to love him; indeed you never are in a position and spirit to exercise discipline with the Lord where

there is not love--righteous hatred of the sin, indignation it may be, but real charity to the person. It would be better to wait upon God if it be not so in our hearts, till we can take it up in the spirit of divine grace. There must be, of course, a dealing in righteousness; but even in dealing with one's child there ought not to be such a thing as chastening it in a passion. Anything that merely arises out of a sudden impulse, is not a feeling that glorifies God about evil. Therefore, in cases of discipline, there ought to be self-judgment, and great patience, too, unless it be something so flagrant that to hesitate about it would be culpable weakness, or want of decision and jealousy for God; for there are some sins so offensive to God and to man that they ought, if we are sensitive to His holiness and obedient, to be met with grave energy and as it were on the very spot. The arena of the sin God would have to be the scene of its judgement according to His will.

Supposing something done in the public assembly, false doctrine in the midst of God's people, if

there were the power of God, and a heart for His rights, it might be due to His majesty to deal with it without delay. This is sufficiently plain from the word of God, where in a case of direct hypocrisy and lying against God, we find the promptness of the Holy Ghost, through the apostle, in the very presence of the Church, which at once judged the fraud that was attempted to be practised upon Him who dwelt there. I deny there was want of love in this: rather was it the necessary accompaniment of divine love acting, through the Holy Ghost's might, in the assembly, or at least, by Peter, as the special instrument of His power therein. It was a stern judgment, doubtless; but it was the fruit of intense desire for the saints of God, and of horror that such a sin should get a footing and shelter among them, and the Holy Ghost should be thus foully dishonoured, and be grieved with the whole Church, if it were connived at. But in ordinary cases the same love would wait, and let time be given for the fault to be owned and repented of. In nine cases out of ten mistakes arise from

precipitancy, because we are apt to be jealous for our own reputation. O how little have we realized that we are crucified and dead with Christ! We feel the scandal, or something that affects the public mind: **this** is not the power of the Holy Ghost, but the selfish egoism that is at work in our hearts. We do not like to lose our character, or to share the sorrow and shame of Christ in those who bear His name. Not, of course, that one would make light of what is wrong: that never could be right about anything either great or small. We ought never to justify the least wrong, whether in ourselves or in others, but accustom our souls to the habitual clearing of the name of the Lord, even if it be about a hasty word. If we begin to be careless about little offenses, there is nothing to preserve us from great sins but the mere mercy of God. If love unto all the saints were working in our hearts, there would be less haste.

We sometimes misconstrue things, and endeavour to give, as we take, a very sombre impression, where evil was but in appearance.