What Is the Lord Jesus More Than Another?

We open to the Gospel according to John, chapter 3, verses 19 to 21, where we read: *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."* Amen.

These verses show us that, although the Light came into the world, people chose to love darkness rather than the Light. It is like preferring old things to new ones, like someone who would choose an old car over a new one.

We must ask ourselves why this choice between darkness and light is set before us. Let us remember the parable of the merchant seeking pearls in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 13. The merchant is looking for goodly pearls, and when he finds one of great price, he decides to sell all that he has to buy it. This example shows how much it matters to set out the value of the pearl if the merchant's decision is to be won.

As we think about the calling each of us has received, we must realise that we live in difficult times, in *the last days*, when some preachers no longer present the Lord Jesus as He is, but preach another gospel, another Jesus and another calling.

Let us also turn to Revelation, chapter 2, where we read verses 1 to 5: *"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Amen.*

We can see that the church in Ephesus is praised for its works, but it is also rebuked for leaving its first love, and that is a serious failing. For the failing, or the sin, that has been committed, it is important that we remember from where we have fallen. We need to search ourselves and return to our first love; otherwise we risk having our candlestick, the symbol of the Light, taken away, and being left in darkness. The Lord warns us that this church has left its first love.

Looking back on my own experience, about 25 years ago, when my eyes began to open more fully, I did many things for the Kingdom of God. People noticed my zeal and said I was in my first love. This expression, *first love*, refers to the early fervour and passion. Just as in a relationship, first love is there at the beginning, during courtship or early in marriage, not at the

end of a couple's life together.

In those moments, our attention is entirely fixed on the one we love, and that is how it should be in our relationship with God. The Lord Jesus praises the church for its works, its labour and its patience, because it cannot bear those who are evil, and because it tried those who claim to be apostles and are not, and found them liars. It is important that we too try such people, that we have patience and suffer for His name without fainting. These are things of great value. But one essential thing to remember is this: it had left its first love.

This verse deserves special attention and careful study. We notice that people often put no emphasis on the call to love. They are not urged to treasure the Lord Jesus as a pearl of great price. When a car is presented, for example, its features are highlighted: its speed, extras like cruise control, GPS, an SOS system. There are cars that, in a serious accident, automatically call the emergency services and are located by the police right at the scene. These features are designed to make you admire the car deeply and to stir up the desire to buy it. But how should the Lord Jesus be presented so that He is chosen and loved? How deep should this love be?

Recently someone asked how we can know whether a person is born again. How can we recognise it? Some say that if he does not show the fruit of the Spirit, he is not. But a newborn obviously cannot yet bear that fruit. How can we tell whether someone is born again? Does he respect the Word of God? Has he denied himself? What exactly can we check to be sure?

How can we tell whether a young man is in love with a girl? Is it possible to see it? In the literature we studied at school there is a novel, called *Ion*, I think, a well-known Romanian classic. In it, a young man named Ion marries a girl, not out of love but for her father's wealth, for the land he owned.

I don't remember the details exactly, but Ion loved another girl. The novel exposes the ugliness of such a marriage, a union forced by material interests. We are called to love the Lord Jesus, but for what reasons? Is it for the benefits He offers us, such as heaven, salvation and other blessings?

Or should we love Him because, in our eyes, He is fairer than ten thousand? Do we set our affection on the Lord Jesus because the Father is rich and promises us a mansion in Heaven, or because He is the fairest of all to us?

In Matthew 10 the Lord Jesus gives us a powerful message, saying in verse 37: *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."* Amen.

People saw a certain zeal in me, because I was sponsoring the Voice of the Gospel and giving to the radio station, among other things. They assumed these were signs of first love. When I was told I was in my first love, I realised they did not truly understand what first love means, and I told them: *"Woe is me if this is first love."* They already had a ready-made picture of what a person living in first love looks like. But what should a person in first love really look like?

When we see someone turning to the Lord, we ought to see that he loves the Lord Jesus more than his parents, his children or anything else. In the book I mentioned, the main character did not love that girl, because she was not beautiful. He felt no attraction to her at all. He was interested only in the material gain.

Let us ask ourselves: what should we see in the Lord Jesus that draws us to Him? With cars, for example, we know what the natural man looks for: how fast it goes, the colour, leather seats, air conditioning, climate control and many other features.

Just as a car attracts us by its features, so the Lord Jesus must draw us by something. There has to be something that makes us love Him, isn't there? We don't love a mere name. We must love the Lord Jesus, but what does He have more than others that we should love Him? As Song of Solomon 5:9 says: *"What is thy beloved more than another beloved?"*

The Lord Jesus tells us clearly: *"Whoever loves anything else more than Me is not worthy of Me."* That is the true meaning of being in love. When you are in love with the Lord Jesus, what does the rest matter? Do other things still have any value?

If, say, there are a hundred girls and I have fallen in love with the most beautiful of them, which one do I think about? The ninety-nine, or that one? Let us go back to the Song of Solomon to explore this idea more deeply. To awaken in us love for the Lord Jesus, we must know the traits of His heart, because without that knowledge we cannot fall in love and feel love. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 1, verse 16, it says: *"Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant."* These words show us the beauty of the Lord Jesus and invite us to reflect on it.

At an event I attended recently, the preacher who addressed the crowd spoke only about Heaven and did not bring out this beauty of the Lord Jesus, which might have helped the people who came in from the world to admire and choose the Lord Jesus, who is the Light, rather than remain in darkness.

Next we read from chapter 2, verse 7: *"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please."* It teaches us that love must not be forced or stirred up before its time. Love can be stirred up by offers, by giving and receiving, but we must ask whether that is genuine love or love conditioned by offers.

When we love someone because they gave us something, that cannot make us love them more than father, mother and so on. What matters is to ask whether this love is true and unconditional.

For love to begin, we must discover the beauty of the Lord Jesus, not just His offers. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verse 9, we are invited to put ourselves in the place of the young woman and to look to the Lord Jesus as the other one in the relationship, considering what this bond should be like.

When you have time, read the Song of Solomon, put yourselves in the place of this young woman, put the Lord Jesus on the other side, and consider how you should be in your

relationship with the Lord Jesus. The verse says: *What is thy beloved more than another beloved? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?* We too must ask ourselves this: when love comes, it comes because the Lord Jesus is the chiefest among ten thousand.

When we call people to God, what message should we bring? Should we urge them to repent so they don't end up in Hell, or to fall in love with the Lord Jesus? Let us remember that the apostle Paul, during his time in Rome, rented a house and for about two years preached about the Lord Jesus and the Kingdom of God. He showed how attractive and beautiful the Lord Jesus is, to awaken genuine love in people. This love must come from the depths of our being, for without it we are not worthy of His love.

I will keep reading from the Song of Solomon and describing the Lord Jesus, bearing in mind that true love must stay with us to the end and not go out. Just as in worldly marriages, where the first burning love can cool in the face of life's trials, we must be aware of the danger of losing this love. In the world we see many divorces, and even where there is no divorce, the relationship between husband and wife can grow cold.

Let us now read from the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verses 2 to 6, and pay attention to the intimate relationship between two people who love each other. Let us ask how much you would have to wound the other before he withdrew, given that this is a relationship built on love and total self-giving, not a mere partnership or contract. Our relationship with the Lord is not one of convenience, but one of deep love and sincere commitment.

When we think of leaving this earth, pictures come to mind of streets of gold and the heavenly palace, symbols of eternity. In this light, our relationship with God must be like the one described in the Word of God: *"His wife hath made herself ready."* This readiness is like a heart that keeps watch even in sleep, waiting for the voice of the beloved: *"Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."* This is the call of the beloved.

And we answer by asking: *"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"* But only when our beloved insists do we feel pity and rise to open to him. When at last we open, our beloved has gone, leaving us heartbroken, longing to seek him without finding him, to call him without receiving an answer.

The Lord Jesus asks of us a relationship of total love. We must ask ourselves whether we have such a relationship and whether our love is like that. The measure of love we receive from Him must be the same as the love we give Him. If we love someone else more than Him, our love for Him shrinks, and that can cause Him to leave. A verse warns us: *"If I love even my own life more than Him, I am not worthy of Him."* This is the first love we are called to.

To find this first love again, we must seek the Fairest of all. In John 14 and John 15 we will explore the nature of this love relationship. It is essential that we keep the Lord Jesus ever before us, because, as the saying goes: *"Out of sight, out of mind."*

If we don't keep our memory fresh, our relationship with Him can weaken, as happens in human relationships, where, if we don't keep in touch, the bond can fade. Haven't you ever wondered why you hadn't called someone you know for a long time? That happens when the relationship has slipped and you no longer give that person importance. You give your time to other things that occupy you, the things that matter in your life and keep you alert in that area.

The same happens in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. It seems the first love has been left, and now there is almost nothing left. What happened to the church in Ephesus, which began its life with God so well? The apostle Paul spent three years there; he taught them, counselled them and wept for them. They began in first love, but now it had dwindled and they had lost it.

If we pay a little attention, we can easily see whether someone is still in first love or not. If we don't know how we ought to love, we won't notice, and today almost no one understands what first love means.

Reading from John 14, verses 21 and 23: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* Amen. I don't want to dwell on the keeping, but on the loving, on: *"He it is that loveth me."*

When someone loves, love moves him to do certain things. If you are a young man and you love a girl, you go and buy her flowers, you buy her what she likes, you do everything to win her favour. Let us read the next verse from John 14 and then go to Corinthians to see the purpose of verse 23: *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."* If anyone loves Me, My Father will love him and I will love him, says the Lord Jesus.

And let us read 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, verse 2, to see what kind of love is there, why the Lord Jesus comes to us, and what relationship He enters into with us: *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."* Amen.

Why does the Lord Jesus come to make His home with us? For what purpose? What does the apostle Paul say here? He is speaking of the past, not the future: *"I have espoused you."* What comes before marriage? The bride prepares herself, and before she becomes a wife, she is betrothed.

But when does the betrothal take place? It happens when there is love, or perhaps we get engaged and discover love along the way. It is important to ask when we should enter into this relationship of betrothal. *"I have espoused you"* is in the past tense.

The Lord's reproach against the church in Ephesus was that it had left its first love, the love it had when it was betrothed to the Lord. *"If a man love me"* makes us ask how we ought to love Him. If we read Matthew 10, we find: *"If anyone loves Me more than father or mother… My Father and I will love him."*

In John 15, verse 9, we read: *"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."* Amen. It is clear that the Lord Jesus wants to enter into a relationship of love, of betrothal, with us. From John 15:15 we see that love moves us to deeds, to expressions of love.

When you love, you can become lovesick. It is a way of expressing how deep the joy is of hearing the words of the one you love. It is said that she was *"sick of love."* Can you see in a young man that he is *"lovesick"*? In the past there were cases where two young people loved each other intensely, but the parents did not agree, and one of them suffered because of it. Have you heard of such cases?

We are not talking now about earthly things, but about the relationship that grew in that young person's mind. Let us try to describe the Lord Jesus so that we understand whom we are falling in love with, whom we love. Our love must be sincere and not driven by the desire to gain rewards such as heaven, escaping hell, health or eternal life.

If we focus only on these *"offers,"* true love will not be born in us. Under Ceausescu, Romania's communist dictator, people thought highly of someone because he owned a car, at a time when cars were rare, in the '70s and '80s. Those who owned a car were often seen as celebrities or rich people. Many women hoped to marry a man with a car, in hope of a better life, assuming he also owned a house.

But in our relationship with the Lord, He wants us to be drawn to Him not for what He offers us, but because He Himself is the fairest and of the greatest price. As His betrothed, we must treasure and long to have His character and His traits, as the Father and the Son have them.

Let us return to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 11, where two aspects of the Lord Jesus are brought out that should draw us: His beauty and the Light He brought into the world. Yet people preferred darkness and the character of the world to the character of Christ. In verse 29 we read: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."* Amen. This verse teaches us three things: to take the Lord's yoke, to learn from Him, and to be in love with Him. When we love someone with all our heart, we are glad to do whatever that person does.

Thinking about the parable of the prodigal son, we notice that the son who stayed at home served and obeyed, but he lacked love. When his father did certain things, that son looked on in anger, which shows there was no true love. True love does not stir up anger, even when it does not understand.

The son who stayed home was not able to truly love, although he listened and obeyed. In the same way, we may keep God's words, but what is essential is to have the love that should always guide us.

We may notice that our partner does not give us the same affection. When he divides his attention among other people, isn't it obvious? Or when a girl flirts with several men while we

love her with all our heart, we realise the feelings are not mutual. The relationship cannot truly begin if only one side is committed.

God, who knows hearts, knows this. He knows when our heart burns for the Lord Jesus. He says: *"Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart"* (Matthew 11:29). We have a wonderful promise: we shall find rest for our souls.

But what concerns us here is that the Lord Jesus is meek and lowly. He is our Beloved, the One we treasure. If our Beloved is lowly, then we too should long to be the same, if we are drawn to His character.

God designed a plan for us to be created in His image and likeness. This is our purpose: to keep the commandments and the word of our Beloved, so that they transform us to be as He is.

He came to love whom? A wretched and sick human being, didn't He? And if we love Him too, He wants to transform us, to make us worthy to be His wife, a virgin without spot or wrinkle. This is the work of God: to bring us to a worthy stature.

What does it mean to be lowly? The Lord Jesus is lowly. We should fall in love with this trait of the Lord Jesus' character, shouldn't we? We often hear people speak lightly and say that someone is humble, but what does humility really mean? It is the opposite of pride; it means being lowly and submissive.

The Son of God is submissive to the Father. And we have the same Father, our heavenly Father. Don't we pray, saying *"Our Father which art in heaven"*? It is the same Father, isn't it? If the Son is submissive, then the Son's wife must be the same. How should she prepare herself? What should we learn when we meet together? We should learn humility, because the Son is humble. When we meet, we should not talk about things that have nothing to do with the character of the Lord Jesus. Instead we should ask ourselves: *"What is thy beloved? What is thy beloved more than another?"* My Beloved is humble, and I want to be humble too, just like Him.

We will read about humility in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8, where the Lord Jesus is presented. These verses help us fall in love with the character of the Lord Jesus. His performance is extraordinary. When He is mocked and tormented, what is His reaction speed? Zero, isn't it? I think of a car with a top speed of 250 km an hour. But the Lord Jesus' reaction speed when He is insulted or mocked is zero. We should want a reaction speed like the Lord Jesus'. Isn't that speed beautiful? Do we want to *"buy"* this trait? This is the Lord Jesus.

In Acts, chapter 8, we will read from verse 30 to verse 35: *"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at

the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Amen.*

What was the Ethiopian reading? What did the Scripture he was reading refer to? Whom was it about? About the character of the Lord Jesus. That was the subject of his reading. An extraordinary trait of character: *"In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; he was led as a sheep to the slaughter."* It seems almost too much; it seems the highest level of humility, which the Ethiopian was discovering as he read.

This is one of the most beautiful traits of the Lord Jesus' character. Philip began to present the Lord Jesus, to show Him, to preach Him, showing what the Lord Jesus is like. This is the Gospel, the beauty of the Gospel, the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

In these times the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they do not see the brightness of this beauty and do not fall in love with the Lord Jesus. But this must be our aim: to present the Lord Jesus in such a way that people fall in love with Him, choose Him, buy this pearl of great price and sell all that they have. If they do not recognise its great value, they will not sell all they own.

Today we see people holding on to many things while also wanting to be with the Lord Jesus. What does it mean that in our humiliation our judgment is taken away? We will now read some harder passages, but they are part of the Word of God, meant to teach us humility, whether we are children, women or men.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, I urge you to read carefully, because it concerns all of us, not just certain people. Verse 21 says: *"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."* Amen.

Many focus only on what the woman must do when they read this passage, but notice that the submission of men is mentioned too: *"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."* We are all called to submit to one another, both women and men. What does submission mean?

As we read earlier, submission is a mark of humility. We must learn to submit, whether to God, to the Lord Jesus or to our brothers and sisters. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, and if we remember from Corinthians, Christ is the head of the man.

If Christ is the head of the man, then how must the man be submissive to Christ? Just as wives must be submissive to their husbands, so husbands must submit to Christ.

We must discover the hidden beauty of the Lord Jesus' heart and fall in love with it, loving it more than anything else. The Lord Jesus urges us not to find this beauty dull, but to count it the greatest treasure. In the Epistle to the Philippians, chapter 2, verse 5, we are told: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* Though He was in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, that is, He did not treat equality with God as something to be

grasped. Paraphrasing, we can say that the wife, although equal with her husband, should not treat that equality as something to be grasped. But in many cases the wife sets herself up as his equal and tells him what to do.

It is important to focus on the humility of the Lord Jesus. There is no moment in Scripture where the Lord Jesus advised God. That would have been an abomination. He humbled Himself and was obedient in all things, submitting to God. This is true humility, unlike human humility, which is often just a tradition. True humility shows itself in full submission.

So let us ask: what should humility look like in the presence of God? Like the Lord Jesus in the presence of God. Children and all of us must follow this example.

In Ezekiel, chapter 16, we read: *"When I passed by thee… behold, thy time was the time of love."* Do not awaken love until it pleases. When the Lord Jesus passes by us and sees that our time of love has come, He chooses to enter into covenant with us, saying: *"I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."*

So begins our life with Him, a life in humility, not in disobedience, recognising that we must not treat equality with God as something to be grasped. The character of the Lord Jesus is the essence of His beauty. It may seem strange, but this is how things are in the Kingdom of God: He *"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."* And *"being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

I love Him so much that I long to be like Him, to become a servant, to humble myself and to be obedient, even unto death, as my Prince, my Beloved, did. *"What is thy beloved more than another beloved? What is He?"* He is humble! Let us fall in love with Him and speak of the beauty of our Beloved, because if we long to be in Him, we will speak about Him.

The Lord Jesus was godly, and *was heard in that he feared*. We too are called to godliness, to seek to be godly, to admire God and to obey Him strictly. This is the character of the Lord Jesus, His beauty, and this is what we have been called to: to fall in love with Him and with His character. It is not enough just to love the Lord Jesus; we must receive Him into our heart, so that nothing else is there.

It is written that *"in the last days men shall be lovers of their own selves, disobedient, unholy, having a form of godliness."* They love something; there is something there. They have zeal, they come to the meetings. They have something. But they do not have first love. Here is a danger: to have godliness and then lose it. That is a great danger, but even greater is never to have had it at all, to have only a form of godliness. There is much more to say, but time does not allow us to say much more. May the Lord help both me and you to fall more and more in love with the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Source: *What Is the Lord Jesus More Than Another?* — Unmodified Word
unmodifiedword.com/written-sermons/what-is-the-lord-jesus-more-than-another