



May 2009—*The Snare of Disordered Love*

One of the many dangers and snares one encounters in following Jesus Christ is that of loving family or friends more than we love Christ. Often we are unaware of this disordered love until some serious event brings it suddenly into view. Then we are faced with the necessity of making an extremely serious and painful choice: do we put Christ and his will first, or do we compromise and put our friend or family member ahead of him?

As so often, Our Lord's own words are both far fiercer and far more tolerable than those of the theologians. He says nothing about guarding against earthly loves for fear we might be hurt; He says something that cracks like a whip about trampling them all under foot the moment they hold us back from following Him. "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife...and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

But how are we to understand the word *hate*? That Love Himself should be commanding what we ordinarily mean by hatred—commanding us to cherish resentment, to gloat over another's misery, to delight in injuring him—is almost a contradiction in terms. I think Our Lord, in the sense here intended, "hated" St. Peter when He said, "Get thee behind me." To hate is to reject, to set one's face against, to make no concession to, the Beloved when the Beloved utters, however sweetly and however pitifully, the suggestions of the Devil. A man, said Jesus, who tries to serve two masters, will "hate" the one and "love" the other. It is not, surely, mere feelings of aversion and liking that are here in question...

So, in the last resort, we must turn down or disqualify our nearest and dearest when they come between us and our obedience to God. Heaven knows, it will seem to them sufficiently like hatred. We must not act on the pity we feel; we must be blind to tears and deaf to pleadings.

I will not say that this duty is hard; some find it too easy; some, hard almost beyond endurance. What is hard for all is to know when the occasion for such "hating" has arisen. Our temperaments deceive us. The meek and tender—uxorious husbands, submissive wives, doting parents, dutiful children—will not easily believe that it has ever arrived. Self-assertive people, with a dash of the bully in them, will believe it too soon. That is why it is of such extreme importance so to order our loves that it is unlikely to arrive at all.

What about you? Who do you love first and foremost in life? Resolving this issue now and letting it be clear in how you live can spare you from much pain and sorrow in the future.

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C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1960), pp.171 -173.