

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 270

THE WONDERFUL LOVE OF JESUS

To know the love of Christ.

Ephesians 3:19

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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THE WONDERFUL LOVE OF JESUS

270

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CHRIST'S LOVE AS MEDIATOR

John Owen (1616-1683)

IT was because Christ loved us that He became our mediator.¹ And it was because the Father loved² us that He appointed His Son to be the mediator between God and man for the redemption and salvation of the church. And this love of the Father for us was “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). The Father’s love is seen in His eternal election³ of a part of mankind to be brought into the eternal enjoyment of Himself, through the mystery of the blood⁴ of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit (2Th 2:13-16, Eph 1:4-9, 1Pe 1:2). Election, being the eternal act of the will of God the Father, is founded on divine love for the following reasons:

Election reveals the glory of God’s nature, which is love, for “God is love” (1Jo 4:8-9). The love of God is the foundation of our redemption and salvation. So, election, being an eternal act of the will of God, cannot be based on anything but that which is in God Himself, and if we could look into all the treasures hidden in God’s wonderful nature, we would find none to which election could be truly attributed but love.

Election is founded on divine love because it is free and undeserved. We did nothing to persuade God to choose us rather than others. Any good done to us which is altogether undeserved, and which is done to promote our good, is an act of love and cannot be anything else. Any good there is in God’s people is the *result* of election and not the *reason* God chose us. The only thing that moved God to choose us was His undeserved love.

The fruits or results of election are inexpressible acts of love. It is by many acts of love that election is brought to fruition,⁵ actually bringing

¹ **Mediator** – literally: “one who goes between”; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1) See also Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² See FGB 238, *God’s Love*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ See FGB 255, *Election and Reprobation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ See FGB 264, *Precious Blood*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ **fruition** – successful outcome of a plan; fulfillment.

about the salvation of all those whom God chose to save (Joh 3:16; Jer 31:3; Eph 1:3-5; 1Jo 4:8-9, 16).

It was because God chose to save a people out of this sinful human race that Christ's office as mediator became necessary. It was because the Son of God loved us that He was willing to become our mediator, and so the whole purpose of the Father's love was to be carried out by Christ.

To understand the love of the Son for the elect, we must first note the following: The whole number or society of the elect were creatures made in the image of God and were therefore loved by God. All that they were, had, or hoped for, came from God's goodness and love. The very life of their soul depended on their love of God shown by perpetual obedience to His will. And what a happy state this was—preparing themselves for the eternal life of love in heaven⁶!

From this state they fell by sin⁷ into a state of enmity with God. This brought upon them all miseries and sorrows both in this life and forever. But despite this terrible catastrophe, our nature was able to be restored to its original enjoyment of God.

So, the first act of the love of Christ towards the elect was pity and compassion. A creature made in the image of God and fallen into misery, yet capable of being restored, is truly an object of divine compassion and pity. But there can be no compassion or pity shown to those who can never be recovered. So, the Lord Christ did not show compassion or pity to the angels that fell because their nature could not be restored (*see* Heb 2:14-16).

The second act of the love of Christ towards the elect was that of delight. Christ saw that it was possible for the elect to be redeemed and saved, so His love for them delighted to take up the great work of their salvation to the glory of God.

But why, we may ask, would He Who was eternally blessed in His own self-sufficiency be so deeply concerned with our lost, forlorn condition? What moved Him to show us compassion and pity? Why did He delight to be our Savior? Did He see something wonderful in us? No. It was merely the infinite love and goodness of His own nature and not anything in us or of us that moved Him to such compassion and pity for us (Ti 3:5).

⁶ See FGB 254, *Heaven*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁷ Q. What is sin? A. Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God (1Jo 3:4). *Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 14; See FGB 240, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Christ now being ready and willing to be our mediator and delighting to take upon Himself the work of bringing us back to God, the way by which God planned to restore us was put to Him. This way of saving all the elect would involve Him in great difficulties and troubles. To the divine nature, nothing is too difficult nor is anything too much trouble. But He was to have another nature in which He was to undergo the difficulties of this work of salvation. He was required to pity us until He had none to pity Him when He most needed it. He was to tread the way of salvation until His soul was heavy and sorrowful unto death. He was to save us from the wrath and justice of a righteous God by suffering that wrath and justice Himself. But far from deterring Him, these proposals only heightened His love for us and increased His delight in the work of our salvation. Indeed, His love, like a mighty river, swept over those ominous proposals, for He says, "Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God" (Heb 10:5-7; see also Isa 50:5-7).

So, driven by His eternal love to undertake the office of mediator and the work of our redemption, a body was prepared for Him. In this body or human nature, which He made His own, He was to accomplish our salvation. His human nature was filled with immeasurable grace and fervent love to mankind. And by this His human nature was made fit to work out the purpose of eternal love.

From this, it is clear that Christ's glorious love was not only divine but also human. The love of the Father, revealed in His eternal purpose⁸ to communicate grace and glory to all the elect, was a divine love only. But Christ's love was also human. And in none of those eternal acts of love could the human nature of Christ have any claim or concern. Yet it is the love of the man Christ Jesus that Scripture celebrates.

So that love of Christ for us is the love of His whole person. It is that love that comes from both His natures, the divine and the human. The acts of love coming from each nature are distinct and different from each other, yet they are all acts of one and the same person. So, whether we consider the eternal love of the divine nature or the love of the human nature revealed here on earth, it is the love of the one and self-same person, Jesus Christ.

It was because of that inexpressible love that the Son of God assumed our nature (Heb 2:14-17). But this act of love was from His divine nature only because it was before the human nature existed. His laying down His life for us was also an act of inexpressible love (1Jo 3:6). Yet

⁸ See FGB 236, *God's Eternal Purpose*, and FGB 237, *God's Decrees*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

it was only the love of the human nature in which He offered Himself and died. But both these acts of love were acts of His divine-human person. So, it is said that God laid down His life for us and purchased His church with His own blood.

This is the love that makes Christ so glorious and which we are by faith to behold. A great part of the blessedness of the saints in heaven and their triumph lies in beholding the glory of Christ and what glorious results His work as mediator has produced (see Rev 5:9-10).

What the saints in heaven see of this glory of Christ is beyond our understanding. Here, this love is beyond our knowledge. There, we shall understand all the dimensions of it. Yet even here, if we are not lazy or worldly, we may behold the glory of Christ's love by faith. And where understanding fails, let worship and adoration take place.

So, make every effort to prepare your mind for such heavenly thoughts. If your thoughts are filled with earthly things, then a sense of Christ's love and its glory will not abide in them. Few minds are prepared for this duty. The outward behavior of most reveals the attitude of their souls. Their thoughts wander up and down to the corners of the earth. It is useless to call such persons to the duty of contemplating the glory of Christ's love as mediator. A holy calmness of mind ruled by spiritual principles, a heavenly mindedness, and a realization of how excellent this divine glory is, are required for this duty of meditation.⁹

We must not allow ourselves to be satisfied with vague ideas of the love of Christ that present nothing of His glory to our minds, for it is by such thoughts that many deceive themselves. All who believe that Christ is God value His love and so are never happy with vague ideas of His love as mediator. To have clear, distinct ideas of Christ's love, ask yourself the following questions:

(i) *Whose love is it?* It is the love of the divine person of the Son of God Who laid down His life for us (1Jo 3:16).

(ii) *How did this love of the Son of God show itself?* It showed itself in the divine nature by eternal acts of wisdom, goodness, and grace. And in the human nature it revealed itself by deeds of pity and compassion, shown by His works and His sufferings for us (Heb 2:14-15, Rev 1:5).

(iii) *Did we deserve Christ's love?* No, we deserved wrath, not love. This thought should be enough to humble you and bring you into the

⁹ See FGB 245, *Meditation*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

best attitude of mind to meditate on the glory of Christ's love as mediator.

(iv) *What did the love of God procure*¹⁰ *for us?* It procured our eternal salvation and our enjoyment of God for ever.

With such clear ideas of the love of Christ and by worship, you may walk in the paradise of God and enjoy the sweet perfume of His mediatorial love (Song 2:2-4).

Finally, do not be content to have right ideas of the love of Christ in your mind unless you have a gracious taste of it in your heart. You may taste that the Lord is gracious; that is, you may experience for yourself His grace in your heart. If you do not actually experience the love of Christ in your heart, you will not retain the idea of it in your mind.

Christ is the meat, the bread, the food provided by God for your soul. And there is no higher spiritual nourishment in Christ than His mediatorial love, and this you should always desire. In His love, Christ is glorious. No creatures, angels, or men could have the least idea of it before Christ revealed it. And after it was seen in this world, it is still absolutely incomprehensible.

From *The Glory of Christ*, ed. R.J.K Law (Edinburgh; Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 50-56, www.banneroftruth.org, used by permission.

John Owen (1616-1683): English Congregational pastor, author, and theologian; born in Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, UK.



O let the love of Jesus be in your thoughts continually! It was His dying that brought you life; it was His crucifixion that paid the satisfaction for your sins; His death, burial, and resurrection that completed the work; and He is now in heaven, interceding for you at the right hand of His Father. And can you do too much for the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has done so much for you? His love to you is unfathomable. O the height, the depth, the length and breadth of this love that brought the King of glory from His throne, to die for such rebels as we are, when we had acted so unkindly against Him and deserved nothing but eternal damnation. He came down and took our nature upon Him; He was made of flesh and dwelt among us; He was put to death on our account; He paid our ransom: surely this should make us rejoice in Him.—*George Whitefield*

If we love and prize and rejoice in any object in proportion to the labor, pain, and expense that it has cost us to obtain it, how greatly must Christ love, prize, and rejoice in every penitent sinner! His love and joy must be unutterable, inconceivable, infinite.—*Edward Payson*

¹⁰ **procure** – obtain, especially with care or effort.

TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.—Ephesians 3:19

IT is of prime importance for the nourishment, health, and fruitfulness of the believer's spiritual life that he should be constantly occupied with the love of Christ, which is a bottomless, shoreless sea. Samuel Pierce designated Christ's love thus: "A subject altogether wonderful, mysterious, and divine, so great and so immense that the more real saints think of it, the more the Holy Spirit is pleased at any time to give them spiritual conceptions of it, the more they are swallowed up in admiring and adoring thoughts of it, and crying out, 'Oh, the depth!'"¹

There is nothing in nature that illustrates Christ's love, nothing in human history or experience that exemplifies² it. Only in the divine relations can we find any analogy. There one is given to us which, though it fills the heart with joy and satisfaction, is nevertheless far above the grasp of our finite minds. Said the Lover of our souls, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you" (Joh 15:9). Such a love we can neither express nor conceive, yet it should be the one subject on which our hearts are continuously set and from which we daily drink.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." As the Father loved Christ from everlasting, so Christ loved them: with delight, with special affection, with an unchanging, abiding, eternal love. Christ has loved His church with all His soul from everlasting. His heart was fixed upon His bride before all time. He loved her as the gift of the Father's love to Him. He loved her as presented to Him by the Father in all her beauty, glory, and excellence, in which she was forever to shine forth as His wife in the kingdom of glory. He loved her as His mystical body, in whom all His glory was to be displayed and admired. He loved her as His "peculiar treasure" (Exo 19:5), as His very own. He was to be her life, her light, her holiness, her righteousness, her perfection and glory; for she was to receive all from Him as her eternal Head and Husband. The origin—the spring—of Christ's love to His beloved is high and

¹ **Samuel Eyles Pierce (1746-1849):** English Baptist preacher and author; from *A Companion for the Lord's Table* (London: A. Campbell, Stationer, 1809), 320.

² **exemplifies** – provides an example of.

incomprehensible. His love originated in the Father's everlasting love to Him as God-man and to believers as the spouse that He had chosen, loved, beautified, and bestowed on His dear Son.

The love of Christ for His people and His feeling toward them transcends³ all conception. His divine person stamps eternal perfection on His love, as well as everlasting worth, virtue, and efficacy on all His mediatorial acts. He Who is the Son of the living God as considered in His distinctive person in the Trinity, Who is the God-man in His theanthropic⁴ person, is the One in Whom the church was loved, chosen, and accepted before the foundation of the world. His people were divinely appointed to partake with Him in all His communicable grace and glory to share in all His honors, titles, and dignities, as far as they are shareable. Nothing would satisfy the heart of Christ but that His redeemed should live with Him in heaven, to behold Him in His glory, and to be perfected in happiness by seeing Him as He is. The wonders contained in Christ's love can never be fully explored. All that is contained in His love will never be comprehended by the saints this side of glory. That which has been manifested of it in His incarnation and in His obedience and suffering is altogether beyond what saints can ever sufficiently appreciate and bless Him for. It is cause for deepest gratitude that we have been brought to know it, to believe it, and to enjoy it.

But since the love of Christ is so transcendent and mysterious, so infinite and incomprehensible, how can it be comprehended and known by us? Completely and perfectly, it cannot; yet truly and satisfyingly it may be. Christ's love to us is discovered in the Word of truth; and as the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding, we are capacitated⁵ to apprehend something of its wonders and blessedness. As the Holy Spirit strengthens us within and calls our faith into exercise, we are enabled to take in some spiritual views of Christ's love. Faith is to the soul what the eye is to the body—the organ or faculty by which light is admitted and by which objects are seen and known. “Through faith we understand” (Heb 11:3) that which is beyond the comprehension of mere reason. Though we cannot fathom the love of Christ, we may drink deeply of it. We can know how wonderful, how free, how transcendent, how selfless, how longsuffering, how constant, how infinite His love is. And this knowledge will have a sanctifying influence

³ **transcends** – goes beyond; rises above the limits.

⁴ **theanthropic** – from two Greek words, *theos*, “God,” and *anthropos*, “man”; this describes the person of Christ the redeemer as both God and man in two distinct natures.

⁵ **capacitated** – enabled.

on our lives. Though we shall never be able to exhaust its unsearchable fullness, it is our privilege to know very much more of this love and have a fuller enjoyment of it than any of us have yet obtained.

The chief spiritual employment of the Christian should be to live in consideration and admiration of the wonderful love of Christ, to dwell on it in his thoughts until his heart is warmed, until his soul overflows with praise, until his whole life is constrained or influenced. He should meditate daily on its characteristics: its freeness, its pureness, its unstintedness,⁶ its immutability. Christ loves us more than we love ourselves. He loved us even while we hated Him, and nothing can change His love for us. We should ponder the manifestations of His love: first, in His acceptance of the Father's proposals in the everlasting covenant, whereby He freely consented to become the Sponsor of His fallen people and serve as their Surety;⁷ and then in His actual carrying out of that engagement. View Him leaving the holy tranquility and ineffable⁸ bliss of heaven, where He was so worshiped and adored by all the celestial hosts, and coming down to this scene of sin, strife, and suffering! *What love that was!*

Consider Jehovah's condescending to take upon Him a nature that was inferior to the angelic, so that when the Word became flesh His divine glory was almost completely eclipsed. Contemplate the unspeakable humiliation into which the Son of God descended, a humiliation which can only be gauged as we measure the distance between the throne of heaven and the manger of Bethlehem. Bear in mind that even as the incarnate One, He made Himself of no reputation, that instead of appearing in pomp and splendor, He "took upon him the form of a servant" (Phi 2:7). That He came not to be ministered to but to minister, not deeming⁹ the most ignominious¹⁰ acts as beneath Him. Remember that He knew from the beginning the kind of treatment He would receive from those He befriended. He knew that instead of being welcomed, appreciated, loved, and worshiped, He would be despised and rejected of men. He knew that though He went about doing good, healing the sick, relieving the needy, preaching the gospel to the poor, He would be opposed and persecuted by the religious leaders, hated without a cause, and misunderstood and ultimately deserted even by

⁶ **unstintedness** – quality of being given without restraint or limit.

⁷ **Surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another; as our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our deliverance upon His payment of our debt upon Calvary's cross.

⁸ **ineffable** – indescribable; too great for words to express.

⁹ **deeming** – considering.

¹⁰ **ignominious** – humiliating.

His own disciples. What love that was—love indeed that passes knowledge, love that should ceaselessly occupy our hearts and shape our lives.

The apostle here made request that God's people might have a more spiritual and enlarged view of the immeasurable love of Christ, that their understanding might be swallowed up in it, that their renewed minds might be more and more filled with the wonders of it, that they should enter into a deeper experimental acquaintance with the same. All the discoveries of the love of Christ that the Holy Spirit makes unto us are in the Word and by the Word, and we are brought to spiritual discernment of that love by the exercise of faith. Christ's love is apprehended only as it is evidenced in its manifestations, and we obtain a spiritual knowledge thereof only as we personally imbibe¹¹ it. Even the renewed understanding is not able of itself to grasp the surpassing love of Christ, but the understanding led by the heart can lay hold of it and find in it fuller satisfaction. Though necessarily imperfect and incomplete, the Christian's knowledge of Christ's love is real and ravishing, and it should be constantly deepening and enlarging. It "passeth knowledge" not only because it is infinite and therefore incomprehensible to the finite mind but also because our personal experience and enjoyment of it can never exhaust it—we but touch its edges and skim its surface.

We have intimated somewhat in the last paragraph what we regard as the difference between "comprehending" and "knowing." Perhaps it was no part of the Spirit's design that we should draw any broad line between them, but so far as we can perceive, it seems to us that the "comprehending" is via the understanding, the "knowing" via the heart; the former being more the result of mental effort, the other of intuition. Thus "knowing" in addition to "comprehending" is feeling a sense of the love of Christ or having an experimental¹² acquaintance with it. Though it transcends the grasp of our intellect, it is a subject of inward consciousness. Though it can be only faintly recognized, it may be adoringly appreciated. As the Spirit graciously takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, as He opens to us more and more the love of Christ by His own effectual teaching, and as He opens our minds in a gradual and imperceptible way to understand, to exercise our thoughts upon it, we enjoy the same in our hearts. That knowledge being formed within becomes a spiritual part of us, so that

¹¹ **imbibe** – receive into the mind and retain.

¹² **experimental** – having a personal experience; experiential.

what we read in the Word concerning the love of Christ we *know* to be truth, for we have the reality of it within our own souls.

“To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” We do not agree with those who say that phrase is a paradox; rather it is a plain statement of fact. We may, we can, we do know the love of Christ in the sense explained above. We believe it, we experience it, we enjoy it as a blessed and glorious reality. Yet our knowledge is inadequate and imperfect, for the infinite love of Christ can never be entirely compassed, explored, or exhausted by us. As Pierce pointed out, “All [that is] known of the love of Christ in and by all the saints on earth—all [that is] known and enjoyed of the love of Christ by all the saints in heaven—is far below what is contained in the person and love of Christ, as considered in His own heart towards us. I have under this view of the subject often said [that] we shall never know anything of the love where-with Christ hath loved us, either in time or eternity, but by its *fruits and effects*...The love of Christ surpasseth the whole of His sufferings as much as they surpass all our guilt and sin. His love was the cause, and His sufferings the effect of it.”¹³ As the cause excels the effect, as the tree is greater than its fruit, so the fountain of Christ’s love exceeds all the streams that flow from it to us.

The angels never can enter fully into the love of Christ for His church and people. Also, the finite-minded saints can never fully understand the fullness of Christ’s love. Nevertheless, it is important that the saint should make it his paramount concern to be more and more absorbed with the love of Christ, exercising his mind thereon, feeding his soul therefrom, delighting his heart therein, praying earnestly that he may more fully understand the love of God. He should attentively consider the revelation given of it in the Word of truth, meditating on its ineffable characteristics, contemplating its wondrous manifestations, and realizing that Christ’s love to His own is eternal, infinite, and unalterable—not only without cessation but without the least diminution. Such a subject is worthy of the saint’s best attention and constant pursuit. It will amply repay his best efforts and greatly enrich his spiritual life.

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



¹³ Pierce, *Companion to the Lord’s Supper*, 330-331.

THE WONDERFUL LOVE OF JESUS

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

He humbled himself.—Philippians 2:8

HERE, my reader, is the great point to which we are aiming to bring you—the *wonderful love* of Jesus in so willingly suffering, “the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18). Oh, how readily did He humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi 2:8)! “Lo, I come...I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:7-8; Heb 10:7, 9). “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luk 12:50). “Who gave himself for us” (Ti 2:14). “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us” (Eph 5:2). This is the spring of all that He hath done, for Christ hath *loved* us.

Constrained¹ by this, He gave Himself as the Son of God and as the Son of man—His soul and body, His life and death: yes, all that He possessed in heaven and on earth, He freely gave for us. What was there above or below, in His previous state of glory or subsequent state of humiliation, that He retained? What part of the price did He withhold? When He could give no less—for all angels and all men would not have sufficed²—and when He could give no more, He gave *Himself*. Ah! This made His [gift] “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour³” (Eph 5:2). And still, it perfumes the oblation⁴ and sends it up each moment fragrant and acceptable before the throne of the Holy One. Oh, surpassing love of Jesus! With the burden of sin, the fire of justice, the wrath of God, the contumely⁵ of man, the malignity of demons, the sorrows of Gethsemane, the pains of Calvary, and the sea of His own blood, all, all in vivid prospect before Him, He yet went forward, loving not His own life unto the death because He loved ours more. Oh, let your heart bend low before this amazing love! Yield to its sweet and attractive influence: let it draw you from yourself, from the creature, from all, to Him. Are you wounded? Does your heart bleed? Is your soul cast down within you? Is your spirit within you desolate?

¹ **constrained** – forced to do something; in this case, forced or compelled by love.

² **sufficed** – been enough.

³ **sweetsmelling savour** – fragrant offering.

⁴ **oblation** – offering; sacrifice.

⁵ **contumely** – rude or contemptuous treatment.

Still Jesus is love, is loving, and loves you. He has suffered and died for you; and were it necessary, He would suffer and die for you yet again. Whatever blessing He sees good to take from you, *Himself* He will never take. Whatever stream of creature love He sees fit to dry, *His own love* will never fail. Oh, can that love fail—can it cease to yearn, sympathize, soothe, and support, which brought Jesus from heaven to earth to endure and suffer all this for us? Be still then, lie passive and low, drink the cup, and let the surrender of your sin, your obedience, and yourself to Him, be as willing and as entire as was the surrender of Himself for you. *Then* shall you, in a blessed degree, be “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18-19).

But the *nature* of His suffering! This is yet to be considered as forming the most essential part of His deep and unheard-of humiliation. *Exile from His Father* was no small element in the abasement⁶ of our adorable Redeemer; it was no slight ingredient of the bitter cup He was now drinking! What a change of circumstances for the Son of the Highest! To leave the bosom of the Father, where, in all the confidence and endearment of the closest and holiest love, He had from eternity reposed⁷ to [become] embosomed⁸ in a world of sin, of anarchy, and of woe! Oh, what a descending this was! We do not assert that He was banished from all intercourse⁹ with God. His whole life, which would seem to have formed one continuous act of devotion (so entirely did He live in the element of prayer, so closely was He enfolded by the atmosphere of communion) would contradict this. But the communion that Jesus held with His Father on earth was far different from that which He had been wont¹⁰ to hold in heaven. *There* it was from His bosom—not a cloud shading His mind nor a sorrow wounding His spirit nor a tear dimming His eye. *Here* it was from His footstool, amid infirmities, sufferings, “strong crying, and tears” (Heb 5:7)...

But the climax of His humiliation, the consummation of His bitter sorrow, was in the garden and on the cross. We go with Him to Gethsemane, and we hear Him exclaim, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38). “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat

⁶ **abasement** – humiliation.

⁷ **reposed** – settled (Himself) with confidence.

⁸ **embosomed** – enclosed.

⁹ **intercourse** – communication.

¹⁰ **wont** – accustomed.

26:39); “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luk 22:44).

We follow Him to Calvary. Amidst the darkness and throes of nature and the still deeper darkness and throes of His soul, a cry more plaintive¹¹ and more bitter breaks upon the ear: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost...And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose...When the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Joh 19:28-30; Mat 27:51-52, 54).

Here we rest. We have descended with Him from the sunny heights of His glory to the dark depths of His abasement: further than this we cannot pass. We have travelled with Him to the utmost limit of ignominy;¹² beyond it, it would seem, He Himself could not go. Now did the storm, which for ages had been gathering strength, break upon Him in its overwhelming fury. Now did He endure the wrath of God to its uttermost. No shield was around Him, no refuge was over Him, no advocate pleaded for Him. His head was uncovered to the tempest, His person was bowed to the stroke, and He met both in their fiercest onset. Oh, was it no humiliation *now* to the Son of God? Hear His bitter complaints: “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away” (Psa 69:1-4). Thus sank the eternal Son! Thus bowed to the dust the Redeemer of men! Here let us pause and adore Him Who, though “equal with God...humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:6, 8).

¹¹ **plaintive** – mournful; sorrowful.

¹² **ignominy** – public shame or disgrace.

Briefly tracing some of the vast blessings that this subject secures to the church of God, the glory that belongs to the Redeemer in His humiliation and sufferings will thus more fully appear.

The first that presents itself to the mind is the *deep and broad foundation that it lays for the salvation of the church*. There could have been no restoration of man and no satisfaction to law and justice but in the humiliation of the Son of God. The very necessity of the case demanded it. The divine government had been dishonored. That dishonor could only be removed by the humiliation of one equal in dignity, holiness, and glory, even an infinite Being. The humiliation of every angel in heaven would not have effaced a single stain of its reproach, nor have restored a single beam of its glory. The law of God had been humbled; justice demanded, as the price of its reparation, the humiliation of the Lawgiver Himself. The incarnate God *did* humble Himself, “and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). Thus, it was Jesus [Who] restored that which He took not away. He restored holiness to the law—satisfaction to justice—dignity to the divine government—honor to God, and happiness and immortality to man. “Then I restored that which I took not away” (Psa 69:4). Oh, what a stable foundation is thus laid for the full salvation of every believer!

The humiliation of the Redeemer opens a *fountain of infinitely great and ever-glorious grace*. Nothing could we have known of the glory of His Person, nothing of the character of God; and all the things of His hidden love must have remained forever sealed had He not so humbled Himself. His coming forth, invested not with the dazzling robes of His infinite majesty, but wearing our degraded nature, descending to our state of deep abasement, yea, sinking infinitely deeper than we, throws open a treasury of grace as rich in its glory and ample in its supply, as were the dark humiliation and deep poverty that made it ours.

Here is glory springing from His abasement: it is the “glory of his grace” (Eph 1:6). “We beheld his glory...full of grace” (Joh 1:14). This fulness of grace in Jesus includes all that a poor sinner needs, all that a [needy] believer requires, all that the glory of God demanded. Here is the grace of pardon in all its fulness—the grace of justification¹³ in all its fulness, the grace of sanctification¹⁴ in all its fulness, the grace of

¹³ **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 32) See Free Grace Broadcaster 187, *Justification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁴ **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God’s Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live

consolation in all its fulness, the grace of strength in all its fulness. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col 1:19). Grace is poured into His lips, and gracious words proceed from His lips. Harken! “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). Harken again! “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). Does He not bind up the broken heart? Does He not preach glad tidings to the meek? Does He not satisfy the hungry soul, and satiate¹⁵ the weary soul with goodness? Has He ever sent the poor away empty? Was He ever known to turn His back upon one humble comer drawing near, bowed with guilt, disconsolate with sorrow, oppressed with trial? Never! Never! Oh, it is with infinite delight—delight of the depth of which we can form no conception—that He welcomes poor sinners. He thinks of His own humiliation for sin. He remembers His own sorrows and tears, agonies and death; and throwing Himself, as it were, into the very center of a bosom storm-tossed with godly grief, He seeks to soothe and hush it to a calm. And how does He allay¹⁶ the tempest? He pours the oil of His own love upon the waves. He sprinkles the conscience with that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and bids the soul go in peace. Dear reader, where least we should have expected it, Jesus is set before us, the “Door of hope,” even in the deep valley of His humiliation. “I will give...the valley of Achor for a door of hope” (Hos 2:15). The gospel of this precious promise is found in the wondrous theme we are now contemplating—the humiliation of the incarnate God. To that humiliation *we* must sink; into that valley *we* must descend. Convinced of sin, separated from all self-reliance and creature-trust, emptied, humbled, laid low in the dust before God, we shall then find Jesus to be the “Door of hope” set open before us in the deep and dark valley of our poverty, hopelessness, vileness, and abasement. Jesus is just the Door we need—a Door to a Father’s forgiving heart; a Door to God’s reconciled love; a Door to the sweetest, closest, holiest fellowship and communion; a Door into heaven itself; a Door so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, so free that the penniless may come...

The humiliation of Christ is also the believer’s path to the enjoyment of the richest blessings here and the highest glory hereafter. How little do we associate our most costly mercies, and even those which we are accustomed to esteem of a more ordinary character (although every mercy is

to righteousness. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 34) See Free Grace Broadcaster 215, *Sanctification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁵ **satiate** – fill or satisfy.

¹⁶ **allay** – calm.

infinitely great), with the abasement of our Lord! How seldom do we trace our happy moments, hallowed joys, high delights, sacred scenes, and precious privileges to this dark part of His eventful history! And yet all flow to us through this very channel, and but for this, never, never had been ours. When the ocean of His goodness rolls in upon me, wave on wave; when I feel the cheering warmth of creature smiles beaming sweetly and fondly; when I review, one by one, my personal, domestic, and relative mercies; when even the cup of cold water, proffered by the hand of Christian kindness, moistens my lips, what is the thought that forces itself upon my mind? All this springs from the deepest *humiliation* of my adorable Christ!

And when I ascend into the higher region of grace and survey the blessings so richly and so freely bestowed—a rebel subdued, a criminal pardoned, a child adopted, a royal priest anointed, union with Christ, covenant relationship with God, access within the holy of holies, conformity to the divine image—still more deeply am I overwhelmed with the thought, “All this proceeds from the infinite *abasement* of the incarnate God!” And yet when I ascend still higher, and passing from grace to glory, [I] contemplate the heaven of bliss that awaits me—in one moment absent from the body of sin and present with the Lord, away from the world, beautiful though it is because God has made it, yet the throne of Satan, the empire of sin, the scene of sorrow, pollution, suffering, and death; and eternally shut in with God, where all is joy, and all is holiness—made *perfectly holy*, and consequently *perfectly happy* to sin no more, to sorrow no more, to weep no more, to wander no more, to fall no more—Oh, how full of glory then becomes the *humiliation* of my incarnate Lord!

Beloved, when God *exalts* thee, remember it is because thy Savior was *abased*. When thy cup is *sweet*, remember it is because His cup was *bitter*. When thou dost press thy mercy fondly and closely to thy heart, remember it is because He pressed His heart to the spear. And when the eye of faith and hope looks forward to the coming glory, oh, forget not that because He endured thy hell, thou shalt enjoy His heaven!

From “The Glory of the Redeemer in His Humiliation” in *The Glory of the Redeemer* (London: John F. Shaw, 1845), 149-166, in the public domain.

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878): Baptist pastor and prolific author; later an Anglican priest; born in Pentonville, England, UK.



CHRIST'S GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.—John 10:28

I shall now proceed to...[an] argument taken from the nature of the love of Jesus Christ the Son and show you that His love secures the standing of all His sheep—or all the elect ones of God—unto everlasting life.

First, *The love of Christ is an early love.* He loved us from everlasting: “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was... Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men” (Pro 8:23, 30-31). It appears it was not only an early love, but a love also of complacency, a love of delight.

Secondly, *Christ's love to His elect is a wonderful¹ love.*

1. If we consider the *Person loving*, viz.,² the Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

2. If we consider the *persons beloved* in their natural and fallen state; for, when such, He set His heart upon them when they lay in their blood (Eze 16:6). It was then He passed by and loved us: “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness” (Eze 16:8). We were His enemies, traitorous enemies, vile rebels to Him, having abominable enmity against Him in our hearts (Rom 8:7).

3. Consider the *wonderful achievements* His love put upon Him to undertake, and the *wonderful effects* thereof. (1) Even to become a wonderful Surety for us, and to pay a wonderful debt. (2) To leave wonderful glory, even to come from heaven, where He lay in the bosom of the Father, and to come to the earth, to *dunghill Earth*. (3) If we consider His wonderful condescension and abasement: He became man, Who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God...[yet] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:6-7).

¹ **wonderful** – amazing.

² **viz.** – from Latin *videlicet*: that is to say; namely.

He became wonderfully³ poor, Who was wonderfully rich, yea, amazingly rich—heaven and earth and all things in it being His own. Yet [He] was born of a *poor virgin*, who doubtless had little or no money to accommodate her or to defray the charges of a lying-in at the inn. Therefore, they turned her into the stable, where she was delivered of our blessed Savior “and laid him in a manger” (Luk 2:7). Oh, what wonderful abasement this was! Moreover, He also had no money to pay the tax that was laid upon Him; therefore, [He] sends Peter to the sea to take a piece of money out of the mouth of a certain fish (Mat 17:27). He had no house of His own to dwell in, no, not a poor cottage. “The foxes have holes,” said He, “and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Mat 8:20). Also, when in His greatest pomp⁴ on earth, He rode on an ass—and that not His own, but one He borrowed (Joh 12:14). Moreover, the good women ministered relief to Him. He had not [means] to supply His own necessities. He was poor in His life, poor in His death, standing charged with the debts of many thousands, the least not owing less than ten *thousand talents*, which could He not have paid and satisfied for, He must have lain in prison for ever. Oh, what a charge of guilt was laid upon Him! Does sin render a man miserable? Doth one sin charged on a person render him poor? How poor then was He for a time, Who stood charged with all the sins of His elect? He was forsaken of all His friends on earth in His greatest distress, and by His Father in heaven. He was poor and miserable in the sight of all that saw Him. They pulled off His hair, spit in His face, crowned Him with thorns, stripped off His garment: and all this for the sake of His sheep, His elect. If we consider the wonderful and amazing wrath He bore, what a curse He was made for us! The wonderful horror, pain, and anguish He felt; the wonderful sweat He sustained, which were great drops of blood; the wonderful passion and sufferings on the cross He endured: He “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev 1:5). He loved His sheep, His people, His spouse, as Himself, above Himself. Mary loved Him so as to wash His feet with her tears; but He loved Mary so, and all His elect ones, as to wash their souls in His own most precious blood. Jacob loved Benjamin, David loved Absalom; but David said [that] Jonathan’s love to him “was wonderful, passing the love of women” (1Sa 1:26). But what is a bubble to the ocean or a spark of fire to a furnace? Or a finite love to an infinite love? What is all love to Christ’s love? Christ’s love to His sheep (His elect) is wonderful because it passeth knowledge: “To

³ **wonderfully** – astonishingly.

⁴ **pomp** – triumphal procession.

know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:19).

i. *It passeth the knowledge of the natural man.* What can he, with all his natural and acquired parts, find out as to the greatness and wonderfulness of Christ's love?

ii. *It passeth the knowledge of the moral man.* What can the natural or the moral philosopher do as to the comprehending, finding out, or demonstrating the nature of Christ's love? Can he sound the depth of the sea? Can he measure the breadth of the heavens? Can he account the length of eternity? Besides, here is a height that their art discovers not; the mathematics teacheth not this mystery: "that ye...may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:18-19).

iii. *It passeth the knowledge of the spiritual man.* He cannot arrive at a full and perfect understanding of it.

iv. *Nay, it passeth the knowledge of the holy angels.* Their wisdom and understanding no doubt is wonderful; but here they are at a loss. They stand in amazement, looking into and admiring with astonishment this love, to see Him that is God become man to save such a vile and sinful creature; to love and delight in Him that was so great an enemy.

v. *It is wonderful because a whole eternity will be but little enough to let out to believers the love of Christ.* It will never be fully known, [for] it cannot be comprehended. All above and all below are at a loss; they are all at a nonplus and astonished at it.

Thirdly, Christ's love to His people [is] an immense or infinite love. Christ's love therefore to His sheep, to His saints, is an immense, incomprehensible, infinite love. As the wrath and anger of God and the Lamb, when kindled and let out, is inconceivable, so is His precious love to His people: this breadth, length, depth, and height doubtless refers to the unsearchable greatness and immensity of God. "Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" (Job 11:7). Canst thou come to the uttermost of what God is? (Rom 11:33). Canst thou find out the inmost recesses or secrets of God's heart, of Christ's heart? Hast thou seen what is laid up in the inner chambers of His Spirit? Then thou mayest know His love; for it is like Himself: "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). Love is His very nature: "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:8-9)...

1. Christ's love is broad—enough to spread over and cover, like a mantle, all the sins of His elect, and to hide them from Satan's rage

and fury. His love is long enough to reach us with His arm of affections, wherever we are or whatever our wants be. Christ's love is deep enough to find us out and relieve us under all depths of afflictions, despondency, or distress of what sort soever. Christ's love has a height in it, enough to defend us like a high wall against all the assaults of those enemies that are in high places and above us. We cannot see them. As Satan is a spirit, he has the advantage of us; such is his nature—he is said to be in *high places*; he is “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2). But God is above him, Christ is in a higher sphere, His love hath a height in it, so that neither height nor depth can separate us from His love, as well as it cannot separate us from the love of the Father.

2. Christ's love is an infinite or an immense love, as appears because it is without beginning. It is from eternity, before ever the earth was. That which was before the world was is without beginning; but the love of Christ to His elect was before the world was, even from everlasting. Yes, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3).

3. Christ's love to His sheep, to His saints, is an infinite or immense love. [It] doth appear because His love to them is as that love the Father hath to Him: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (Joh 15:9). Though “as” may not be a note of comparison in every sense, yet it doth signify the truth, firmness, and greatness of Christ's love. The Father loveth Christ with an eternal, immense, immutable, constant, free, full, and perfect love; so doth Jesus Christ love every one of His elect ones! Again, saith Christ to His Father, “that the world may know that thou hast...loved them, as thou hast loved me” (Joh 17:23). He would have all know how He loves His people or such that were given to Him.

4. It appears to be an infinite love. It cannot be found out, defined, or comprehended. It passes all understanding, as also by the glorious and amazing effects thereof, which are apparent to all.

5. Because it is without ending. All those that Jesus Christ doth love or hath set His special affections upon, He loveth to the end (Joh 13:1). His love is not only *from* everlasting but also *to* everlasting. He abides in His love, notwithstanding all the weakness, frailties, or decays of love in His people towards Him. He heals, and with a *nevertheless*, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (Hos 14:4).

Fourthly, the love of Jesus Christ to His saints is a conjugal⁵ love. It is an espousal love. Though I purpose to speak to the nature of that blessed

⁵ conjugal – marital.

and mystical union that is between Christ and every believer under a distinct argument, yet let it be considered here that the consideration that Christ's love is such as that He doth espouse every godly soul and marry it to Himself; this must needs be one of the highest arguments that can be produced to prove their final perseverance because espousal love is the sweetest, firmest, and most abiding love, especially the love of Christ's espousal. "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD (Hos 2:19-20).

What words can more fully express the firmness of this marriage-contract, or espousal love of Christ to His true *Israel*? This conjugal love of Christ is that never-exhausted fountain of all our spiritual and eternal comforts. All mercies, like streams that never fail, flow to all believers, from hence. Can a man show greater love to a woman than to espouse her to be his wife? This is beyond the love of parents to children: Christ bestows Himself and all He hath on us. And that He might do this, He bought or purchased us. Christ bought His spouse. None ever gave such a vast sum for a wife as Jesus Christ hath done; and shall any think He will lose her after all this, if He is able to help it? How can that enter any man's thoughts?

Will a faithful husband, a tender husband, suffer his most dear and beloved wife, [to whom] he hath such affection, to be torn from him, abused, and pulled into pieces, [while] he looks on? If he hath power in his hand, will he not rescue her, nay, die upon the spot before he will see this done? But alas, alas, what is the love of any mortal man to his spouse, to his wife, when compared with the love of Christ to His saints? [He] loved His church and gave Himself for her (Eph 5:25); and [His] love is, as you have heard, so wonderful, infinite, and inconceivable. Moreover, I hope no one doubts His power. Others may see their wives ravished and torn to pieces before their eyes and cannot help it; they are not able to help and save them. But Christ lacks no power, as He lacks no wisdom, care, or affections.

Now, what are the enemies, the most dangerous enemies of the spouse of Christ? Is not sin the chief—sin, the world, the devil, etc.? Will He then, think you, let sin prevail, Satan prevail, as far as to deflower,⁶ murder, and destroy that precious soul He thus loves and hath espoused⁷ to Himself? Those who assert final falling from a state of true

⁶ **deflower** – deprive of virginity.

⁷ **espoused** – taken in marriage.

grace must say He doth...He that can believe such a doctrine, let him. But,

Fifthly, *Christ's love hath an attracting and a retaining quality in it.* It draws the soul to Christ, and it keeps it close with Christ when it hath received and embraced Him. It draws, nay, constrains the soul to love Christ: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). And no man or woman that loves Christ sincerely [can but] hate sin: it constrains the soul to return love for love. Christ's love is like Elijah's garment that he cast upon Elisha, who immediately ran after Elijah and said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" (1Ki 19:20). Thus doth Christ's love to the soul in all that feel its influences. They follow Him, cleave to Him, and also keep with Him; for like as the fear of God, so the love of God is put into our hearts (if we are sincere Christians), and we shall not, cannot finally depart from Him.

Sixthly, *Christ's love is a free love; as nothing did purchase it, so nothing can nor shall lose or forfeit it.* "I will love them freely" (Hos 14:4).

From the whole I infer: If the love of Jesus Christ is an early love, a love of complacency; if it is a wonderful and amazing love; if it is an immense, infinite, and incomprehensible love; if it is a conjugal love, an attracting and retaining love, a free and abiding love, which He hath to every believer; then He will not ever let go [of] that hold He hath of every one of them, so as to suffer them to fall from Him, as eternally to perish. But such *is* the nature of the love of Jesus Christ; therefore, He will never so let go [of] that hold He hath of every believer as to suffer them to fall so as eternally to perish.

From "Sermon IX," in *A Golden Mine Opened: Or The Glory of God's Rich Grace Displayed in the Mediator to Believers: And His Direful Wrath against Impenitent Sinners: Containing the Substance of near Forty Sermons upon Several Subjects* (London: Printed for the author, 1694), 193-199;
in the public domain.

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704): English Particular Baptist preacher and author; born at Stokeham, Buckinghamshire, England, UK.



Oh! This love of Christ! It is beyond all degree, standard, or compass. In comparison with it, other love, high and noble as that other love may be, dwindles into insignificance.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

THE OCEAN OF CHRIST'S LOVE

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

THE mind has often been sensible of a feeling of awe as we have stood upon the shore and gazed upon the vast expanse of the ocean. With a similar yet far transcending emotion, we approach the subject that is now to engage our thoughts—the *infinite ocean of Christ's love*. Of all the sympathetic emotions of our Lord's humanity, the emotion of love must be regarded as the parent source. We should have known nothing of Christ or of His redemption but for *love*. The stupendous fact that Christ loves us—loves man, sinful man—admits us to the secret of all that He has done and is still doing for man. There is no other solution to the marvelous mysteries of His incarnation and sacrificial death but this: Christ hath *loved* us.

Love originated all, explains all, illustrates all—love is the interpreter of every divine mystery. There is not a circumstance of our Lord's history that is not another form or manifestation of love. His incarnation is love stooping; His sympathy is love weeping; His compassion is love succoring;¹ His grace is love acting. His teaching is the voice of love; His silence is the repose² of love; His patience is the restraint of love; His obedience is the labor of love; His suffering is the travail of love; His cross is the altar of love; His death is the burnt-offering of love; His resurrection is the triumph of love; His ascension into heaven and His sitting down at the right hand of God are the enthronement and the intercession of love. Such is the deep, the vast, the boundless ocean upon which our thoughts are now about to launch. The soul muses³ in silent awe as it gazes upon this fathomless, illimitable⁴ sea.

Like the eternity of God, we know not where it begins or where it terminates. It has neither beginning nor ending. Like the peace of God, it “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7) like itself, it “passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19). And yet there exists not an emotion of Christ of which the saints of God have a more truly blessed experience. Christianity is the experience, as it is the embodiment, of love. A religion destitute of the love of God in the heart is a vain religion. A religion without love is a religion without soul, without life. All real, vital, saving religion

¹ **succoring** – strengthening.

² **repose** – state of being calm and composed.

³ **muses** – is absorbed in thought.

⁴ **illimitable** – without limits in extent, size, or quantity.

resolves itself into love—love to God in Christ and love to man. Your religion, beloved, may be wanting in some of the more visible attributes of profound knowledge, brilliant gifts, costly offerings; yet is there in that heart of yours the deep, silent, gentle throbbing of a true and sincere love to Christ? Then your religion is real. You have no eloquence, perhaps, to speak for Christ, and you have no power to do for Christ; but you have love enough to suffer for Christ, yes, if necessary, to die for Christ. Enough! “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (Joh 21:17). “Enough, my disciple,” says your Lord; “[go and] feed my lambs” (Joh 21:15). “Lord, I go! Thy love constrains me to the lowliest service in Thy church!”

Let us now descend from the shore and dip our line of faith into the depths and endeavor to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Eph 3:19) of this infinite ocean of love that has flowed down to us from God through Christ—an ocean which has its shallows for the babe and its depths for the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

The love of Christ is a *divine* emotion. Were it the most exquisite, profound, and pure that could possibly find a home in the human heart, and yet were created, it would still be but a finite affection; and a mere finite love could not have met the requirements of God’s moral government by the perfect satisfaction and honoring of which sinful man is saved. Why is it a love that “passeth knowledge” (Eph 3:19)? Why cannot the deep line sound it, the swift wing reach it, the eagle eye pierce it, the eloquent tongue describe it? Why are there depths and heights, lengths and breadths, which distance all thought, imagination, and measurement? Because it is the love of deity. The love of Christ is the love of God. We employ no rhetorical exaggeration, we speak not in hyperbole,⁵ but the words of truth and soberness, when we declare, on the authority of revealed truth, Christ to be the eternal and essential Son of God: “Christ...who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5). Listen to the argument. “God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:1-3). “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Heb 1:8). All the names, attributes, and works predicated⁶ of deity are ascribed to Him, which, were He not God, essential, absolute

⁵ **hyperbole** – figure of speech consisting in exaggeration to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression, but not meant to be understood literally.

⁶ **predicated** – asserted; affirmed.

God, were blasphemy the purest and most sublimated.⁷ Hear the voice of prophecy: "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). Speak we of creation? "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col 1:16). Speak we of providence? "By him all things consist" (Col 1:17). Speak we of universal dominion? "He is Lord of all" (Act 10:36). Claim we divine inspiration for the Scriptures of truth? "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (Joh 6:63). "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luk 24:45). Speak we of omniscience? "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts" (Rev 2:23). Of omnipotence? "Christ the power of God" (1Co 1:24). Of omnipresence? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat 18:20). Of immutability? "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). Is it the office and power of Judge? "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). Is He to be loved with a love belonging only to deity? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1Co 16:22).

But enough! It is not the accumulation of Scripture proof woven around a doctrine that establishes its truth. One text of Scripture or single declaration of God's Word taken in its connection, simple in its meaning, grammatical in its construction, and correct in its rendering, should be sufficient to command our unquestioning faith, win our deepest affection and purest homage, when so essential and vital a doctrine as the deity of Christ is taught us in the Bible; such should be our full belief in and profound reverence for the revealed Word of God.

In addition to the direct and positive evidence, there are collateral⁸ proofs of the deity of Christ equally as strong and conclusive. Our Lord is beautifully styled the "forth-beaming of the Father's glory" (see Heb 1:3). Could this be affirmed about a mere creature? We cannot separate Christ from the essence of the Godhead without destroying the Godhead. To destroy the deity of Christ, we must first destroy deity itself. A denial of the divinity of the Son is a denial of the divinity of the Father. "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1Jo 2:22-23).

⁷ **sublimated** – refined.

⁸ **collateral** – additional but secondary.

Prostrate thyself, my soul, before this great mystery of godliness—"God manifest in the flesh" (1Ti 3:16). Angels study it; seraphim and cherubim adore it; the spirits of just men made perfect magnify it. Do thou believe it, rest in it, entwine it with every fiber of thy heart, blend it with thy sweetest song, O my soul, for thy Savior is divine, thy Redeemer is God! Nothing short of a divine love could or would have borne our sins and the punishment of our sins. The weight of the one and the terribleness of the other would have crushed and annihilated a mere created affection. There existed no love but the love of deity equal to the work of salvation. Who was willing, who was able to bear that heavy load, to endure that overwhelming curse, but the eternal Son of the Father? Oh, think, beloved reader, what the love of Christ has done and suffered: the burden it bore, the sorrow it felt, the humiliation it underwent, the insults, ignominy, and privation through which it travelled—its groans, its sighs, its tears, its darkness—how inconceivably it agonized, how freely it bled, how voluntarily it died. Think of the sins it has pardoned, the guilt it has cleansed, the declensions⁹ it has restored, the backslidings it has healed, the sorrows it has soothed, the patience it has exercised, the gentleness it has exhibited, and then ask: could any other but a *divine* affection have done all this and endured all this? Yet all this was exhibited in the love of Christ "which passeth knowledge." Love less divine, less strong, less gentle had never won thy heart, uprooted thy enmity, tore thee from thy idols, enthroning Christ—Christ all, Christ only, Christ supremely, Christ forever!

"Love divine constrains me: I am thine. Incarnate love has seized me and holds me in almighty arms. Here's my salvation, my eternal hope, Amidst the wreck of worlds and dying nature, I am the Lord's, and He for ever mine."¹⁰

It follows from this statement that the love of Christ is *eternal*. There is no reasoning, no philosophy, so correct as that of God's Word. Did men—*theologians*—employ the same rules of interpretation or the same process of reasoning in the study of the Bible that they do in their scientific research and inquiries, there would be less false doctrine, crude, blind, erroneous teaching in the pulpit and from the press. Why should the doctrine of Christ's eternal, electing love be thought a thing incredible? Admit His deity, and you acknowledge His eternity. Acknowledge His eternity, and you must accept the truth of His *everlasting* love... "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3) is the divine

⁹ **declensions** – occasions of falling away from the standard; fallen conditions.

¹⁰ Isaac Watts (1674-1748) from "Thoughts and Meditations in a Long Sickness, 1712 & 1713" in works 4:524.

declaration that places the antiquity of Christ's love beyond a doubt.

Christ is the Covenant Head of His people, the “head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:22). In Christ we are chosen. Through Christ the covenant is made with us by the Father—in Christ we are blessed with all spiritual blessings—in Christ we are called—and in Christ we are pardoned, justified, sanctified, and glorified. Every blessing that appertains¹¹ to our salvation from first to last is interwoven with Christ—in His hand and through His relation to the Father and to us. Well may the apostle give utterance to that magnificent doxology: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:3-6). Such is the eternal ocean from whence flows this river, these rivulets and springs, which, bearing on their bosom innumerable blessings of grace, glide through the church of God—Christ's garden—clothing it with living verdure,¹² enriching it with divine fruit, adorning it with unfailing bloom, and breathing over it the fragrance of “a field which the LORD hath blessed” (Gen 27:27). Thou everlasting love of Christ!—divine source of my eternal redemption—fontal springhead¹³ of my sweet refreshment in this weary land where no water is—pledge and earnest of all that my faith believes, that my hope expects, and for which my panting spirit longs, enthrone thyself upon my heart and under thy gentle, yet all-commanding, all-constraining power may my consecrated being, my surrendered life, evince.¹⁴

From *The Sympathy of Christ*, 125-167, in the public domain.

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878): Prominent evangelical pastor and author; born in Pentonville, England, UK.



Christ's love is our *soul* and, therefore, *sole* life. Then, and indeed not till then, do we live, when we enjoy divine love. Our bosoms cannot breathe forth the breath of life before Christ breathes in the breath of love.—*John Durant*

¹¹ **appertains** – is related.

¹² **verdure** – lush green vegetation.

¹³ **fontal springhead** – fountainhead.

¹⁴ **evinced** – demonstrate clearly; make evident.

BREADTH, LENGTH, DEPTH, & HEIGHT

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.—Ephesians 3:17-19

THE apostle desires that when the love of Christ becomes to us a solid reality, we may have close communion with it... We should know the inmost secrets of the Redeemer's love—its doings and sacrifices that are the apparent part of it—its breadth, its counsels and its plans—its length, its endurance and patience—its height, its triumphs and glories—its depth, the secret part of it. We would know all that is knowable, for when we know all that has been learned by mortals, there is still something that is beyond our view. Hence, the apostle adds, “to know the love of Christ, *which passeth knowledge*.” Let me come to the very words of our text and point out *their order* to you.

The first object of the Christian's knowledge should be *the breadth of the Savior's love*. I know a certain school of Christians who have need to study this point, for they have a very narrow idea of the Lord's lovingkindness. They cannot be brought by any means to conceive of it as being broad; to them it is no wider than a razor's edge. They conceive of divine love as a very narrow stream; they have never seen it to be a mighty, flowing, abounding, and rejoicing river such as it really is. The breadth of Christ's love, dear friends, we are told in Scripture, is such that it extends to all ranks and races of mankind—not to the Jew only, but also to the Gentile. The love of Jesus Christ does not surround our favored island alone, but like the ocean it washes every shore. The love of Jesus Christ has been extended to kings upon their thrones, but with equal and more frequent bounty to the slaves in their dungeons. In some respects, the love of Jesus comes to every man, for there is not a man or woman born who does not owe something to the benevolence of God through the love of Jesus. The respite¹ that keeps the sinner out of hell is no doubt the result of the love that said, “Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well” (Luk 13:8-9). Beloved, the benevolent love of Jesus is more extended than the lines of His electing love; for we hear Him saying, “O

¹ **respite** – brief period of relief.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not” (Luk 13:34). That is not the love that beams resplendently² upon His chosen, but it is true love...pitying and benevolent love that revealed itself in honest tears of grief. I would not have you omit this view of the subject when you are measuring its breadth, although we still feel that in its utmost depth and fulness that love flows only to His people...

But, brethren, we get the best idea of the breadth of Christ’s love when we behold it flowing to our lost and guilty selves. I never thought it so broad a stream until it reached to me, even to me! I feared that I was far away from its blessed margin, but the river swelled and overflowed its banks until at last it washed me, even me. How broad it must have been to have reached to some present here, who had wandered into the plains of sin and had followed their own wanton³ devices, yet the breadth of the river embraced even them. You may measure the breadth of it by the sins that it covers. When a river is overflowing, you tell⁴ how broad it must be by the little hillocks⁵ and the treetops that you can see in it. You may see how broad the love of Christ is as it reaches to such offences as these: it reaches to theft, to drunkenness, to blasphemy, to fornication, to adultery, to murder. The Savior’s measurement of it is this: “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men” (Mat 12:31). There is a bound:⁶ it stops at one sin that is unto death (1Jo 5:16), but of that we know nothing, and I trust we never may. But with that one exception, as broad as sin is, so broad is this mighty love of Christ that covers it all.

Do you not think, however, that most of us fail to see the breadth of Christ’s love in matters of providence? You know what is meant by the breadth of a man’s mind, the breadth of his thought, when he can consider a great many subjects at once, when he has the ability to accomplish many designs and many purposes with one stroke. Now, the breadth of the Savior’s love is just this: there is no part of His people’s interests that He does not consider, and there is nothing that concerns their welfare that is not important to Him. Not merely does He think of you, believer, as an immortal being, but as a mortal being too. Do

² **resplendently** – brilliantly shining.

³ **wanton** – lustful; sexually unrestrained.

⁴ **tell** – comprehend; discern.

⁵ **hillocks** – small hills.

⁶ **bound** – boundary line.

not deny it or doubt it; “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Mat 10:30). There is nothing that concerns His beloved that is unimportant to our Lord. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Psa 37:23). It would be a sad thing for us if this river of love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be wrought for us in that part of our business that did not come under our gracious Lord’s inspection! O believer! Rest assured that the heart of Jesus concerns itself about your meaner⁷ affairs: He cares for your buying and selling, your counter and counting-house,⁸ your ships, your carts, your horses, your barley, your wheat, your hay, and your straw. Your children, your little ones, and everything that concerns you concerns Him also. The breadth of His tender love is such that you may go to Him in all matters; for in all your afflictions, He is afflicted. “Like as a father pitieth his children,” so doth He pity you (Psa 103:13).

This invites us to look at the breadth of the Savior’s love under a still greater aspect. All the concerns of all His saints that have ever lived or ever shall live are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh, what a heart His is that doth not merely comprehend the persons of His people but comprehends the diverse and innumerable concerns of all those persons...He thinks of all the cares and all the troubles and all the joys present and to come of every blood-bought one! Now see, dear friend, if thou canst measure the breadth of the love of Christ. Thou hast a task before thee that thou wilt not yet accomplish, and if thou couldest, there would still remain another breadth, namely, that breadth measured by the boons⁹ that He brings. Think of what He has brought you! He has brought you justification—yes, adoption, sanctification, eternal life! The riches of His goodness are unsearchable; you shall never be able to tell them out or even conceive them. Oh, the breadth of the love of Christ!...

The next object of study is the *length* of Christ’s love. It has been well observed that if Christ had thought upon His people for ten minutes, it would have been a wonderful condescension. In fact, it would have been a thing to sing of in heaven that Christ Jesus did once think upon us because we are not worthy of a minute of God’s thoughts. [But] just try, if you can grasp the thought: He has thought upon His people as long as He has existed. Is it not eternal love, and what is longer than

⁷ **meaner** – lowlier; common.

⁸ **counter and counting-house** – bookkeeper and his office of accounting.

⁹ **boons** – gifts; blessings.

that? “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). Coeval¹⁰ then with deity itself is the love of deity towards its chosen ones. God did love us in His Son long before the world began. If an angel were to start from today with the design of finding out when God’s love began, he would doubtless fly on until he lingered at the cross. “Here,” he would say, “here is the fountain, here is the source of it all.” But he would be reminded that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (Joh 3:16).

Then there was a love before the giving of His Son. He would fly onward until he paused at Isaiah’s day and heard of God’s lore in the prophecy that the Son of man should bear the iniquity of His people. He would say, “Surely it begins here!” But saints would remind him of yet older words of comfort, and he would fly on until he stopped outside of the garden of Eden and heard the Lord say, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head” (see Gen 3:15). “Surely,” saith he, “It began here.”

But divinely instructed, he would go back yet further, even to the eternal councils where salvation was first planned and contrived in the cabinets of wisdom before the world was. He would have to go back, back, back until creation had vanished, until there remained not a shred of existence except the absolute self-existent deity. Then in the Eternal Mind, he would see thoughts of love toward a people to be formed for Himself... This love is not only without beginning, but it is without pause. There is never a moment when Jesus ceases to love His people. The love of Jesus knows nothing of suspended animation. There are some rivers in Australia which lose themselves, and for miles along their bed you find nothing but dry stones at certain seasons of the year. It is never so with the love of Christ. It is long and without a break from beginning to end; it is a chain without a single broken or feeble link. The love of Jesus possesses an eternal existence in which there is not a single intermission nor even a sign of failure or hint of an end. Here let us rejoice without trembling. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (Joh 13:1). We lean our heads upon this pillow, and we sleep right sweetly there: “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29). He saith, “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). “For whom

¹⁰ **coeval** – existing at the same time.

he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30). There are no *ifs* and *buts* in this circle of grace. All is certain as the throne of God. Our conquering Captain shall bring many sons to glory, and His shall be the praise. Dear friends, we studiously consider the length of this love of Christ; but I am persuaded, study it as we may, we shall never completely grasp it. It is so long that your old age cannot wear it out, so long that your continual tribulations cannot exhaust it, your successive temptations shall not drain it dry. Like eternity itself, it knows no bounds.

My time has fled, and I am only in the center of my subject, and therefore the rest of the discourse must be in brief hints and hurried sentences.

The depth of the love of Jesus! Consider it as stooping to look upon such an insignificant creature as man! View the depth of that love in receiving such sinful creatures into His embrace! What a depth is seen when the Lord Jesus Christ selects some guilty wretch who has openly broken the laws of his country and subjected himself to punishment from his fellowmen, and yet the Lord Jesus freely pardons him when he repents of sin and receives him into His heart’s love. The depth of this river of love is best seen, however, in the fact that Jesus became a man, deity became incarnate! The Lord of angels slept upon a woman’s breast. Nor is this enough. Being a man, He bears our sorrows, goes through the world weary, poor, and patient, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). Nor is this all: He bears our sins. The iniquities of His people, like a huge load, are laid upon His shoulders, and He stands as their substitute. Even yet it is not enough, for He bears our punishment; and on the bloody tree, He bows His head and is obedient even unto death. Hell’s waves rolled over Him; the eternal wrath of God spent itself upon His blessed head. He was made lower than the angels are, but He stooped lower still until He called Himself “a worm, and no man” (Psa 22:6). Oh, the depth of the agony of Jesus smarting for sin! O sinner, you cannot have gone too deep for Christ’s love to reach you. O backslider, you cannot have sinned too foully for forgiveness. Thou who hast gone beyond conception in sin, thou who hast practiced the foulest and most devilish of sins, the depth of Christ’s love is still deeper, and He is able to save even to the uttermost.

Think next of the height of the Master’s love. You see it is put last, as the highest point of learning. There are some who have advanced as far

as to understand somewhat of the depths, who do not know the full dignity and glory of an heir of heaven and have felt but little of the power of His ascension. Why, the love of Jesus, even in this present life, is a height unspeakable, for has it not lifted us up to become sons of God? “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). It has given us an earnest of the inheritance. It has made us anticipate the hour when we shall dwell with the angels of light. It tells us that our conversation is in heaven, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. Yet, brethren, the height of this love will be best seen in a future state. You shall be borne up to dwell with Christ in the clouds when the world is in a blaze, and when the judgment is passed you shall be carried by angels’ wings up to the seventh heaven where God dwelleth. Oh, the breadth, the length, the depth, the height! To sum up what we have said in four words: For breadth, the love of Jesus is immensity; for length, it is eternity; for depth, it is immeasurability; and for height, it is infinity. O Christian, may the Holy Spirit instruct you in these great things!

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, August 19, 1866,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



How is it saints know when Jesus loves them? Answer: Christ has ways of telling His own love peculiar to Himself. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him” (Psa 25:14). How ridiculous is it to think that Christ cannot make known His love to the soul! I shall mention one way: by drawing the soul to Himself. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee...and thou becamest mine” (Eze 16:8). “No man can come to me, except the Father...draw him” (Joh 6:44). Now when the Lord Jesus draws near to a dead, carnal sinner and reveals to him a glimpse of His own beauty, of His face fairer than the sons of men, of His precious blood, of the room that there is under His wings; and when the soul is drawn away from its old sins, old ways—away from its deadness, darkness, and worldliness and is persuaded to forsake all and flow toward the Lord Jesus—then the soul is made to taste the peace of believing and is made to know that Jesus loves him. Do you know that Christ loves you? Have you this love-token, that He has drawn you to leave all and follow Him? To leave your self-righteousness, to leave your sins, to leave your worldly companions for Christ? To let all go that interferes with Christ? Then you have a good token that He has loved you.—*Robert Murray M’Cheyne*

PROOFS OF CHRIST'S LOVE

Edward Payson (1783-1827)

I need not inform you that love, like every other affection of the heart, is in its own nature invisible to every eye but that of omniscience. We cannot look into the heart and see it glowing there. We can discern it only in the effects that it produces, in the external signs that constitute its language, and that manifest its existence. We see it as it exists, not in the fountain, but in the streams; and from the copiousness¹ of the streams, we infer the fulness of the fountain. Where the genuine effects of love are most abundantly displayed, there, we conclude, love exists in the highest degree. It is by this rule that we are to estimate the greatness of our Savior's love. Let us then inquire what are the genuine effects, the external indications of love, and how far they appear in the conduct of our Redeemer.

I. One of the effects and indications of love is a readiness to submit to privations² and inconveniences for the sake of assisting or relieving the person beloved. It is by the degree in which our friends exhibit this effect of love that we estimate the strength of their affection for us. The greater the inconveniences and privations to which they are willing to submit for our sakes, so much the greater do we suppose their love for us to be. We infer that parents love their children because we see them willing to make laborious exertions³ and to deny themselves many comforts for the sake of giving them an education and of providing for their future [needs]...Should a person sell himself for a slave to redeem his friend from slavery, we should form still more exalted ideas of the strength of his friendship.

Now, what proofs of this kind has our Savior exhibited of the greatness of His love for us! The Scriptures fully answer this question. Yet in consequence of our situation and our ignorance of heaven, we can understand their answer but very imperfectly. They tell us that when He was rich, He for our sakes became poor, that we "through his poverty might be rich" (2Co 8:9). They tell us that when He was in the form of God, He humbled and emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Phi

¹ **copiousness** – fulness.

² **privations** – lack of or being deprived of usual comforts or necessities.

³ **laborious exertions** – physical or mental efforts requiring considerable time and diligence.

2:6-7). They tell us that He had glory with His Father before the world was (Joh 17:5); that He laid aside this glory and “made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7). In a word, they inform us that He left heaven and lived a life of labor, poverty, and contempt on earth. It appears from this account, then, that He submitted to be deprived for many years of the glory, the society, and the felicity⁴ of heaven, of glory and felicity too great for us to conceive of, and that He voluntarily exchanged all this for the lowest state on earth. [He] cheerfully endured all the inconveniences, privations, and needs attendant on such a state. All this He submitted to because He loved us.

Now, were I speaking to angels or to persons who had seen heaven, who know what it is, who know what glory and felicity our Savior enjoyed there; who know how widely it differs from earth and how exquisitely painful it must be for one so holy, so averse to sin as He was, to live in this sinful world; to witness the sins of its inhabitants and to endure the contradiction of sinners—I say, were I speaking to persons who know all this, they would need nothing more to convince them that our Savior's love was inconceivably great. [They would need] nothing more to make them exclaim, “Behold, how He loved us!” But alas! I speak to those who know none of these things or at least who know them but very imperfectly. Indeed, I speak of what I know almost nothing myself. Little, however, as we know or conceive of what our Savior renounced and of what He submitted to for our sakes, does it not appear from the preceding remarks that the love which drew Him down from heaven to earth must have been without a parallel great? Is it not obvious that the love that should lead a monarch to renounce his throne, a servant to follow his master into exile, or a man to sell himself into slavery for the redemption of his friend, would be weak in comparison with the love that Christ displayed for our sinful race when He exchanged heaven for earth to save them?

2. Another effect and indication of love is a willingness to suffer pain for the beloved object. Other things being equal, we consider that love as the greatest which induces a willingness to suffer the greatest degree of pain. And this is just reasoning, for self-love makes us unwilling to suffer. Of course, when we are willing to suffer for the sake of another, it proves that we love him as we love ourselves; nay, that our love for him is sufficiently strong to counteract the influence of self-love. Let us then inquire what Christ's love for us led Him to suffer for our sakes.

But here we labor under the same difficulty that has already been

⁴ felicity – happiness.

mentioned, a difficulty arising from our ignorance. We know but little even of the bodily sufferings that He endured for our salvation. We know indeed that He was scourged until the naked bones appeared through His mangled flesh; that He was buffeted or beaten upon the face; that His temples were pierced with thorns; that He was fastened to the cross by nails driven through His hands and feet, and that, with His whole weight thus suspended, He hung for six hours, bleeding, parched with thirst, and agonizing in the pangs of death.

But though we know these facts, we know but little of His bodily sufferings. It is one thing to read or hear of what He suffered and quite another thing to form a just conception of it. By what effort either of our understandings or of our imaginations are we to conceive of tortures that we never felt, to conceive of the pangs of crucifixion, to conceive of the agonies inflicted by hanging with the whole weight of the body suspended on nails driven through the hands and feet—parts of the frame which are, perhaps above others, endowed with the most exquisite sensibility. One stroke of the scourge, one thorn piercing our temples, one of the many repeated blows by which the nails were urged home would probably give us more lively ideas of what our Savior suffered than all our efforts can excite. And yet the tortures that His body endured were but a part, and incomparably the smaller part, of His sufferings. They wrung from Him no groan, no expression of anguish.

But His mental sufferings did more. They wrung from Him not only groans but great drops of blood. Before He was arrested, and while His body was free from pain, we are told He was in an agony. He exclaimed, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38). “And his sweat was as...great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luk 22:44). Is it asked, “What occasioned this mental agony?” I answer, it was the curse of the law, which, we are told, He bore for us. It was the hand of His Father, the hand of omnipotence that, as the prophet informs us, bruised Him and put Him to grief (Isa 53:4-9). The burden of man’s guilt that He bore, the weight of divine wrath that we deserved, was what crushed Him down. He drank the cup that we were doomed to drink, that cup into which, an apostle tells us, was poured the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. It was of this He said, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Mat 26:39). It was the agonies occasioned by drinking this cup that made Him cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46).

Now, if we cannot conceive the full extent of His bodily sufferings, how much less can we conceive of the nameless anguish of His soul? Who, on this side [of] everlasting burnings, can conceive what it is to

drink the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. Yet under the united pressure of all these inconceivable corporeal and mental agonies, He consented to die; and it was love, *love for us*, which induced⁵ Him to consent. Well, then, may we exclaim, while standing by His cross, "Behold, how he loved us!" He Himself says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Joh 15:13). And the apostle, pursuing the same thought, intimates it to be possible that for a good man some would even dare to die. This greatest, strongest proof of love, our Savior has given by dying for us. And this proof was, in His case, peculiarly strong... He was under no necessity of ever tasting the pangs of death. "No man," says He, "taketh it [*my life*] from me, but I lay it down of myself" (Joh 10:18). While we then, in dying for a friend, only give up a life that we must soon part with, He gave up for us a life that He might have retained forever. And not only so but gave it up in the most painful manner possible, forsaken by His friends, insulted and mocked by His enemies, and agonizing under a complication of the most excruciating corporeal and mental tortures. Yet He had the same natural aversion to suffering that we feel. How great, then, must have been the strength of His love for us, since it could so far prevail over His love for Himself, as to make Him willing to bear all this for our sakes... Our Savior's love for us—blessed be His name!—did not fail. It was stronger than death.

3. Another proof and measure of love may be found in the number and value of the gifts that it bestows on the object beloved. We naturally conclude that a person, who, without any other motive than [unselfish] affection, gives us great and valuable gifts, loves us much. And the more numerous and costly his gifts are, so much the greater do we think his love to be. Tried by this, as by all other rules, our Savior's love for us will be found great beyond all comparison. His gifts cannot be numbered, nor can their value be computed. He gives us Himself and all that He possesses. He gives us the pardon of numberless sins, every one of which deserved death. He gives us divine light to illuminate our minds, divine grace to purify our hearts, and divine consolations to comfort us in our afflictions. Nay, more—He gives us heaven, gives us everlasting life, felicity, and glory; [He] gives us kingdoms, crowns, and thrones, compared with which the scepter of the most powerful earthly monarch is a worthless bauble. Nor does He give what cost Him nothing. No, He paid the full price of all that He gives us; and if

⁵ induced – led.

we estimate the value of His gifts by the price they cost Him, we shall be convinced that they are inestimable. It would have cost Him infinitely less to give each of us a world or many worlds; for to create a world costs Him but a word. But to purchase the gifts that He bestows on us cost Him His blood, His life; cost Him all the agonies that I have vainly attempted to describe. If, then, we measure His love by the gifts He bestows on us, we shall see that it is boundless, and we can only cry, "What manner of love is this?" Let no one reply, "Where are the gifts of which you tell us? We have them not." I answer, "Christ offers them freely to all of you, to each of you, even to the meanest and the worst; nay, more—He urges and entreats you to accept of them. If you refuse or neglect to accept them, the fault is not His. The gift is no less real, nor less proof of His love because you do not choose to accept it." All who do accept His offers find that they are not empty words. They enter on the immediate enjoyment of many of His gifts and receive an earnest that secures to them the final possession of all, so that they may say, "Christ has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall live and reign with Him forever and ever" (*see* Rev 1:5-6).

Lastly, love may be measured by the provocations⁶ it overlooks, and by the degree of patience with which it bears unkindness and ingratitude. Of all the trials to which love can be exposed, this is the most severe. To love those who are kind, affectionate, and grateful for our love, to adhere to them in adversity, to suffer for them, and load them with favors, is comparatively easy; nor does it require a very high degree of affection to do this. But to persevere in doing good to the ungrateful and perverse, who are jealous and suspicious, and who render us evil for good; to bear with the most unreasonable and cruel provocations continually repeated; to forgive again, again, and again, and still find new acts of forgiveness called for; to see our very kindness turned against us and yet to continue to be kind is indeed the victory, the triumph of love—strong, unconquerable love. Among all the effects of parental love, its strength is so clearly displayed in nothing as the way it leads parents to bear with the multiplied follies, the ingratitude, and disobedience of undutiful children.

But in this, as in all other respects, the love that Christ has displayed for our race rises far above a father's or a mother's love. For more than four thousand years before His coming, our race was employed with very few exceptions in disobeying and offending Him. When He came,

⁶ **provocations** – actions or speech that cause anger or resentment.

instead of being received by mankind as their friend and benefactor, He was hated, slandered, ridiculed, and persecuted with the utmost virulence and malignity. In a similar manner, He has been treated by mankind ever since. Even His professed disciples often requite⁷ His love with the cruelest distrust, unkindness, and ingratitude. They show little concern for His honor. They are slow to believe, slow to learn, and quick to forget what He has taught them. Every day, and almost every hour, He has reason to say to them, "O ye of little faith! Do ye thus requite my love, O ungrateful and unwise!" All this He foresaw when He consented to die for us; but the current of His love was too deep and strong to be checked or diverted from its course. And notwithstanding the innumerable slights and provocations which He has received and is daily receiving, it still flows as deep and strong as ever. Sabbath after Sabbath, we make light of His invitations and treat Him with indifference and neglect; but He overlooks it all and comes again with offers of mercy, again to be slighted. Year after year, He stands knocking at the door of our hearts; and, though He finds them closed against Him, waits and knocks still. Generation after generation of our ungrateful race live and die rejecting Him; yet His love does not become cold, and He still visits a thankless world with messages of mercy and offers of salvation. He...still endures the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Now, was there ever love like this, love so perseveringly, I had almost said, obstinately, kind? Love that could glow with undiminished fervor for so many centuries with nothing amiable⁸ to excite it, no grateful returns to feed it, but, on the contrary, numberless provocations to extinguish it? Had not His love for our race been infinitely stronger than anything that is called love among men, it would have wholly ceased some thousands of years since, and He would have desisted from making attempts to bless and save us. Well, then, may we lift our hands in wonder and exclaim, "Behold, how He loves us!" Well may we say of such love as this, many waters cannot quench it, "neither can floods drown it" (Song 8:7).

From *The Complete Works of Edward Payson*, Vol. 2 (1846), 568-578,
in the public domain.

Edward Payson (1783-1827): American Congregational preacher; pastor of the Congregational Church of Portland, ME; born in Rindge, NH, USA.



⁷ **requite** – pay back.

⁸ **amiable** – loveable.

AN INSEPARABLE LOVE

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”—Romans 8:35

IN these verses, we come to the end and to the grand climax of this most marvelous chapter, than which, surely, there is nothing greater or more wonderful in the whole of Scripture...Indeed, [Paul]...summarizes and brings to a final climax the whole argument of the entire chapter, which, as we have indicated, pertains to assurance, the absolute certainty that all who are justified by faith will arrive at a state of ultimate glorification.

Starting now with verse 35, we remind ourselves that the apostle has been putting up a series of challenges to the doctrine of final perseverance...Now Paul comes to the last challenge in which he considers the possibility that *we* might fail. All these other challenges have been in terms of God's attitude toward us—any weakening of God's power, any lessening of God's love, and the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as judgment has been committed to Him. They have all been from that side. But now he takes up an argument from our side: What if *we* should fail? What if we, as the result of trials, troubles, and tribulations, should somehow or other fail and thereby be separated from the love of Christ? He takes this up and answers it.

Note again his method. He gives a list of the possible things that may come to try us—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. Then to make it complete, he gives us a quotation from the Old Testament: “For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Psa 44:22). He means that these trials and troubles and tribulations will come, and do come, and particularly because we are Christians. The New Testament, far from promising us a life of ease, and a life in which there will be no difficulties and problems, rather does the opposite. It says that because we are Christians, we are likely to meet additional troubles: “*For thy sake* we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Rom 8:36). The early Christians were severely persecuted because they were Christians. They were told that they must renounce their Christianity and say, “Caesar is Lord.” But this involved the denial of Christ, and for long years and for His sake, they were “killed all the day long,” being “destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Heb 11:37). Christians

must *expect* tribulations. The ancient Romans used to thresh their corn by means of what they called a *tribulum*, a kind of sledge or wooden platform studded underneath with sharp pieces of flint or with iron teeth; and the impression given here is of a man being beaten, and beaten down, because of his loyalty to Christ. It may include death itself. “We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” is a way of describing the possibility of death.

The question the apostle raises is, How can we stand up to all this? Is it not possible that under tribulation we may somehow fall away and find ourselves as reprobates?¹ For we are weak, we are in the flesh, and these powerful enemies can wear one down mentally, physically, and in every other respect. That was true of Christians in the first century, and it is true again today. Many Christians, probably at this very moment, are being subjected to a process known as “brain washing.” They are put in cells, a powerful light is made to shine down upon them, they are given inadequate food, and they are interrogated by a series of interrogators without being allowed sufficient sleep, all in an effort to break down their faith.

How can one stand up to all this? The apostle says in effect: “I have taught you that nothing shall be able to separate us from God’s love. I have told you that if you are justified you are glorified; that these things are certain. I have taught you the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints.” But can it really be true? Can it stand up to this kind of severe trial and testing? The apostle answers that question, as he has answered every other objection that he himself has put up for the sake of argument. He supplies a twofold answer. We note with interest that he really gives the answer in the very form in which he puts his question. “Who shall separate us”—*us*—“from the love of Christ?” The “us,” of course, refers to a particular people only, those who are Christians, those whom God “foreknew,” whom He did “predestinate,” and whom He “called,” and whom He “justified,” and whom He “glorified.” So, the moment he says *us*, in a sense he gives the answer.

The further part of the answer in the very form of the question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” is that “the love of Christ” does not mean *our* love to Christ, but *His* love to us. “Who shall separate us from this love of Christ that has taken hold of us?” That love is the magnet that has taken hold of us. Paul asks, “What can pull us away from it?” Here, again, is the answer: it does not depend on us at all! He is not asking, “Can our love to Christ stand these tests?” but rather,

¹ **reprobates** – people given over to eternal damnation.

“Can the love of Christ to us stand these tests?” And immediately the situation is entirely changed.

The proof that that is the meaning of “the love of Christ” in these verses is Paul’s answer: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37). It is “through him that loved us” that we triumph. At the end of the statement, we meet the same truth: [none of these things] “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). So, right through, it is not our love to Christ or to God the Father, it is the love of Christ to us, it is the love of God to us. So already we have the answer to the question in the very way in which he formulates his question.

It is interesting and important also to note that the apostle puts his assertion in the past tense: “We are more than conquerors,” not through Him that “loves” us, but “through him that *loved* us.” He surely does this quite deliberately. He is reminding us that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ died for us, as he has already told us in the 5th chapter: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure² for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:6-8). Again, in verse 10 of that chapter: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” The argument is that if Christ did that for us while we were sinners, enemies, blasphemers, opponents, and aliens, how much more will He now, by His life, continue to save us until finally we are glorified. We have already met this argument in verse 34 of this chapter 8: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” The first reply is, then, that Christ has proved His love to us in that He “died for us,” even when we were in that sorry condition.

But not only so; for, as Paul has reminded us in verse 34, Christ is now in heaven interceding for us. So, what he says is that it is Christ’s love to us and the power of Christ that holds us and guarantees our continuance. Nothing can separate us from that love because it is His love for us, and because it is an all-powerful love.

There is a wonderful statement concerning that love in the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, beginning at verse 25: “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Why did He do so? The answer is, “That he might sanctify and

² peradventure – perhaps; possibly.

cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (vv. 25-27). He died for His church in order that He might ultimately present her to Himself perfect, washed, cleansed, and purified. This is what Paul is virtually saying in this 8th chapter in these verses: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

Christ died for the church, not simply that she should be forgiven, but that she should ultimately arrive at this absolute perfection—without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” He has set His heart on her for that end, and He will not allow anything whatsoever to rob Him of that result. Nothing will be permitted to stand between Him and His purpose for the church (us), which He shows in His love for the church. That is the first part of the answer.

Next, we must look at this phrase “more than conquerors.” Not only, says the apostle, shall nothing separate us from His love to us; in all these things that try to separate us we are “more than conquerors” with respect to them. This is what he is particularly concerned to emphasize. In every case, his argument has been *reductio ad absurdum*.³ He is not content with merely answering objections, he ridicules them; and he does it here. We are not simply enabled by His love to hold on and not to fall away and falter; neither is it the case that we just manage to obtain a victory. We are “more than conquerors,” a very strong expression! The Christian is not a man who manages somehow or another just to obtain an entrance into heaven. He is “more than conqueror.” He not merely stands up to these trials; he demolishes them. He is enabled to overcome them completely. He not merely conquers them; he is “more than conqueror.” And let us not forget that death is included. Everything that can possibly come against us is included.

But how is the Christian made “more than conqueror” over all these things by the love of Christ? It is the love of Christ that does it, as I have shown. How does it work? We have already answered, in a sense, in dealing with verse 28: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” There is virtually nothing new here. Paul is simply stating it in a different way and repeating it for the sake of emphasis.

How are we made more than conquerors over these things which, when they come to us, help us as Christians to see the nature of life in

³ *reductio ad absurdum* – Latin: form of argument that demonstrates a statement is false by showing that a false, absurd, or contradictory result follows from its acceptance.

this world? The greatest danger confronting the Christian is not so much the opposition of the world as the enticements⁴ of the world. When the world persecutes us and deals with us harshly, it makes us ask, “Why is it doing this?” and we have our answer: “It is doing this to us because we are Christians.” And that makes us remember that because we are Christians, we are receiving the same treatment as Christ received. And as verse 17 has said, “If we suffer with him,” we shall be “glorified together.” The world persecuted Him, and it is persecuting us. So, persecution, far from getting us down, reminds us that we are aliens in the world; we are but “strangers and pilgrims” (Heb 11:13; 1Pe 2:11). We do not belong to this world: “as he is so, are we in this world” (1Jo 4:17). It already makes us see the real character of this world and reminds us that we are now the “children of God: and if children, then heirs” (Rom 8:17), with all the blessings that the word implies.

Trials and tribulations also force us to think of the glory that is awaiting us. In thought, we are back again to verse 18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The trials drive us to think in these terms, and in terms of all that follows in verses 19 to 32. They turn our attention to the promised glory, and *they make us begin to long for that glory*. We know something of the following: We “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:23-25). These trials, troubles, and tribulations turn our minds to the glory that awaits us; and the moment they do so, they become as nothing. So, we are “more than conquerors.”

Furthermore, the trials remind us, as we have been seeing, of our relationship to Him—that we are His people, that His mark is upon us. He has set His heart upon us; He has a purpose for us. Not only so, when we endure these things, He will give us special encouragements. He helps His people, He aids us, He smiles upon us. Most saints have said that times of persecution have been to them blessed times, that they got to know God and the Lord Jesus Christ better when they were in the furnace of affliction than they had ever done before. They all agree with the psalmist in saying, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psalm 119: 71). That is their universal testimony...

⁴ **enticements** – things that attract or tempt someone, often by offering pleasure or advantage.

This love of Christ to us will never let us go; it matters not what happens. He makes us “more than conquerors.” He enables us even to “glory in tribulations also” (Rom 5:3). So the apostle has answered the last possible objection to the teaching concerning the final perseverance of the saints. Now he winds it all up; he underlines it all in the magnificent final statement in verses 38 and 39: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”...

Let us examine the statement under a number of headings. He says, “I am persuaded.” He is not saying all this simply because he happens to have a particular feeling in him at the moment.

Neither is he just hoping—hoping against hope. What he says is, “am certain.” It is interesting to note that he puts this in the passive, “I am persuaded,” which means “I have come, through a process of persuasion, to a settled conclusion.” That is the true content of the phrase. He does not persuade himself; something else has persuaded him. He is passive. The result is that, as the result of this process of persuasion, he has come to a settled conclusion: he is certain. It is an absolute certainty, beyond any doubt whatsoever.

How has this happened to him? It is as the result of his consideration of the truth as it has been revealed. He has been brought to this conclusion by the evidence that God has put before him—God’s purpose and all that he has been saying from verse 28 onwards; indeed, all he has been saying in the entire epistle. He belongs to “the called according to [God’s] purpose.” That took us back to eternity, to God’s eternal plan and all that has happened since. And in the light of all that, Paul was driven to this inevitable conclusion. No other conclusion is possible.

What is his conclusion? Of what is he persuaded? He is not persuaded that circumstances are about to improve. Many people seem to think that Christianity is a persuasion that things are going to get steadily better. They believe that as Christianity is preached, and as people become more educated by the Christian teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, the world will gradually be changed, trials and troubles will come to an end, and no people will be led “as sheep to the slaughter.” But this is not the apostle’s teaching. He gives no indication that he expects to be delivered out of his trials or that they are going to be removed during the remainder of his earthly life. Actually, the apostle was martyred, as were very many of the early Christians. What he is

interested in is that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; that is his only concern.

Let me emphasize the “us” again—“Nothing shall be able to separate us,” the Christians, those who are “the called according to [God’s] purpose.” God’s love is to them, and to them only.

God’s wrath is against all others. Such is Paul’s teaching. His chief concern is to know that all is well between himself and God; and he is assured that it is. In that he rejoices; that is what makes him happy. “Let the world do what it may,” he says; “I am one of God’s people, I am one of Christ’s people, I am among ‘the called,’ and nothing else matters.” He is “persuaded” of this, this “love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Why does he add the words “in Christ Jesus our Lord”?...The apostle’s answer is that no love of God can be known except in and through Christ Jesus our Lord.

No text is more frequently abused than John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” a statement which shows clearly that the love of God is always in and through Christ Jesus. What most people talk about as the love of God is nothing but their own philosophic conception of love. It is not God’s love. God’s love is a holy love, a righteous love, a just love, a love always in Christ. No man will ever know the love of God except he believes and trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. He must believe that He is the Son of God, he must believe in His incarnation, he must believe He was “made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law” (Gal 4:4-5). He must believe that He bore the penalty and suffered the punishment of sins not His own and rose again for His people’s justification. This is the only way one can ever know the love of God or ever be involved in it. You must believe the full doctrine the apostle has announced from the beginning of the epistle concerning what God has done in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All the love of God is in Him; it comes to us through Him, and through Him alone.

From *Romans, An Exposition of Chapter 8:17-39: The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), 440-450;
used by permission.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



CHRIST'S PATIENT, ENDLESS LOVE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them
unto the end.—John 13:1*

WHAT patient and continuing love there is in Christ's heart towards His people! It is written that "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Knowing perfectly well that they were about to forsake Him shamefully in a very few hours, in full view of their approaching display of weakness and infirmity, our blessed Master did not cease to have loving thoughts of His disciples. He was not weary of them—He loved them to the [end].

The love of Christ to sinners is the very essence and marrow of the gospel. That He should love us at all and care for our souls—that He should love us before we love Him or even know anything about Him, that He should love us so much as to come into the world to save us, take our nature on Him, bear our sins, and die for us on the cross—all this is wonderful indeed! It is a kind of love to which there is nothing like it among men. The narrow selfishness of human nature cannot fully comprehend it. It is one of those things which even the angels of God "desire to look into" (1Pe 1:12). It is a truth that Christian preachers and teachers should proclaim incessantly¹ and never be weary of proclaiming.

But the love of Christ to saints is no less wonderful, in its way, than His love to sinners, though far less considered. That He should bear with all their countless infirmities from grace to glory—that He should never be tired of their endless inconsistencies and petty provocations²—that He should go on forgiving...incessantly and never be provoked to cast them off and give them up—all this is marvelous indeed! No mother watching over the waywardness of her feeble babe in the days of its infancy has her patience so thoroughly tried, as Christ's patience is tried by Christians. Yet His patience is infinite. His compassions are a well that is never exhausted. His love is a love that "passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:19).

¹ **incessantly** – continually; without ceasing.

² **provocations** – actions or speech that make someone annoyed or angry.

Let no man be afraid of beginning with Christ if he desires to be saved. The chief of sinners may come to Him with boldness and trust Him for pardon with confidence. This loving Savior is One Who delights to “receive sinners” (Luk 15:2). Let no man be afraid of going on with Christ after he has once come to Him and believed. Let him not fancy that Christ will cast him off because of failures and dismiss him into his former hopelessness on account of infirmities. Such thoughts are entirely unwarranted by anything in the Scriptures. Jesus will never reject any servant because of feeble service and weak performance. Those whom He receives He always keeps. Those whom He loves at first, He loves at last. His promise shall never be broken, and it is for saints as well as sinners: “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37).

From *Expository Thoughts on John* Vol. 3, 1-3,
in the public domain.

John Charles Ryle (1816-1900): Anglican bishop and author; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



The measureless love of Christ—who shall tell it out? The sparkling, priceless gift that the covenant of grace guarantees to every heir of mercy—who shall read the catalogue? Who shall hold the scales while I weigh so much as one of these huge benefits? Ten thousand times ten thousand mercies greet us. Such is the love of Jesus that He is not satisfied with merely saving us from ruin, but He enriches us according to His own riches in glory and ennobles us according to His own excellent dignity. He is ours; the Spirit is ours; the Father is ours; all things are ours, whether things present or things to come; all are ours, for we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. Would God I could describe to you what I sometimes feel about my Lord and Master’s love. When I think of the trespasses He has forgiven me, of the gifts He has bestowed on me, and reflect with a childlike spirit on the great wheels of Providence revolving for my welfare; while I know that He is tutoring me for the skies and educating me for eternity to possess a crown that no head but mine can wear, to own a harp that no hand but mine can ever play, and to enter a mansion that none can ever occupy but this poor, unworthy soul, I am melted with gratitude, and I do bless Him for His love! Deeply abashed, though highly honored, I could creep to His feet and kiss the very dust whereon He stands. Blessed be the Son of God! He has multiplied the tokens of His love while we were unworthy of His slightest notice.—*Charles Spurgeon*

How great, how inconceivable will be our Savior’s happiness after the final consummation of all things! Then the plan for which our world was formed will be completed. Then every member of the church, for the sake of which He loved and visited our world, will have been brought home to heaven to be with Him where He is.

—*Edward Payson*