

Christ's Love to the Believer Part 2

By John Durant (1620-1686)

Eph 3:19

I. The Text Opened

A. Ephesians 3:19

1. "And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God," (Eph. 3:19).

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. DOCTRINE: That love which Christ bears to believers is a transcendent love.

1. The love of Christ to believers is transcendent because it is above expression.
 - a) Those who enjoy Christ's love do not know how to express it.
 - (1) *Such is the nature of transcendent love, that it is beyond their knowledge of how to express it in any language.*
 - b) The Scripture describes high and majestic aspects of God as being unspeakable.
 - c) So, when it would elevate and declare the transcendency of that rapture which Paul experienced when he was taken up to the third heaven, it is described as unutterable and unspeakable, impossible for any man to express (2 Cor. 12:14).
 - (1) *The Scripture also speaks of the transcendent and "unspeakable" joy Christians experience by believing in 1 Peter 1:8, "You rejoice with joy unspeakable."*
2. Christ's love is transcendent and may be said to be above knowledge in that it is above apprehension.
 - a) Believer's language cannot express, nor can their knowledge apprehend, the height of their Savior's love.
 - b) The love of Christ confounds the most intelligent of men and angels.
 - (1) *It is so high that there is no reaching of it, so deep that there is no sounding of it, so long that it exceeds measuring, and so broad that there is no comprehending it.*
 - (2) *Without a doubt, both the operations of the Father's hand and the expansion of the Son's heart are acts that cannot be comprehended.*
 - (3) *Likewise, both the Father's works and the Son's love equally transcend knowledge and are unable to be apprehended.*
3. Christ bears to believers a transcendent love that passes knowledge in that it is above conception.
 - a) Imagination can conceive that which reason cannot comprehend.
 - b) So that now when I say the love which Christ bears to believers is transcendent, and when you read in the text that it passes knowledge, you may understand that

it is above the expression of the finest oratory, the comprehension of the deepest theory, and the conception of the most sublime imagination.

4. If you read and spiritually consider what is presented in the Song of Songs, you will see that the love of Christ to believers is transcendent in its glory, convincing power, and proof.

a) When I consider the fourth chapter of that song, I cannot help but wonder at the high transcendency of Christ's love to believers.

b) Most assuredly I conclude that the affections are sweet, strong, glorious, and inconceivable when the expressions are so ravishing, so great, so high, as they are in that chapter.

c) I shall give one general demonstration to let you see that Christ's love to believers is transcendent, and this is shown in the true nature of his love which comprehends all kinds, acts, or demonstrations of love whatsoever.

(1) As such, it must be a transcendent love.

d) If there is some doubt about whether Christ's love to believers includes and contains in it all other kinds or acts of love, I will answer by an induction, or enumeration of the several kinds of love.

(1) Among others, the moralists tell us of these four kinds of love: 1. A love of friendship, 2. A love of pity, 3. A love of sympathy, and, 4. A love of complacency.

(2) Instead, I refer to these as four demonstrations, or degrees of one and the same passion of love rather than four kinds that are distinct and different.

(3) Further, I show that Christ's love to believers includes and contains all of them, and for this reason it must necessarily be transcendent.

5. The love of friendship is so called because it is that kind, or act, of love by which we follow one whom we see and love as a friend; and to whom we wish good.

a) Now this kind (or degree) of love is found in the love of Christ to believers.

b) Christ looks on and loves all believers as friends.

c) He counts them as friends and calls them all by that name (John 15:14), and this truth appears in his dealing with them. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does. But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you," (verse 15).

(1) Those whom we love as friends we open our minds to; we communicate the secrets of our heart to. Christ deals thus with believers, and thus dealing, does he not declare to them the love of friendship?

6. The love of pity.

a) This follows on the former, for as Job says, to him that is afflicted pity should be showed by his friend (Job 6:14).

b) This is included in Christ's love to believers.

c) For upon that love of friendship which he bears to them, he shows pity toward them.

(1) When no eye pitied them, his eye did.

(2) When sinners and Satan laugh at their misery, Christ sighs to see their sorrows and pities their souls.

(3) It is here said in Isaiah 63:9, "in his love, and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

7. The love of sympathy (which in truth is but a high degree of pity) is also contained in the love of Christ to believers.

- a) Men sympathize with those whom they love; they take up the miseries of their beloved on themselves.
- b) When Jesus Christ sees any believer groan under sin or sadness, he comes, and by a sympathy afflicts himself.
- c) “For in all their afflictions,” the prophet says, “he was afflicted,” (Isaiah 63:9), as if he himself was in their sadness and under their sin.

(1) *The author to the Hebrews tells us, “we have not a high priest who cannot sympathize with our infirmities,” (Heb. 4:15).*

(2) *His meaning is that indeed, our high priest, Jesus Christ, sympathizes with believers in their sorrows.*

8. The love of complacency (which indeed is the highest degree of love) is also contained in Christ’s love to believers.

- a) You have a description of this love of complacency (and a demonstration also of the thing in hand) in Zephaniah 3:17, “The Lord thy God who is in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.”

(1) *It is the nature of the love of complacency to rest in itself and to rejoice in the object of its desire with singing. In this way Christ acts to believers.*

(2) *He first loves them, and then rests in that love.*

(3) *And after, he solaces himself in their souls and rejoices with singing while he rests in his love for them, over them, and in them.*

(4) *As the Father did from all eternity by his love of complacency, resting in the Son, and taking his delight in him (Proverbs 8:30).*

(5) *So does Jesus Christ rest in believers, and solaces himself in their persons. For as it is there added in verse 31, “His delights were in the sons of men.”*

(6) *In this way, Christ’s love to believers is comprehended in this highest kind (or degree) of love, namely, that of complacency.*

B. It is a Transcendent Love

1. On the substance of the love of Christ to believers, when spiritually considered, it will appear to be transcendent.

2. There are four things which I shall touch upon briefly, as the substantial declarations of the hyperbolic excellency of this love, namely, 1) the nature, 2) the degrees, 3) the duration, and 4) the operation of this love.

3. To begin with, the nature of Christ’s love to believers is transcendent because it is of the same nature that the Father’s is to him.

- a) The most transcendent love of all is in God. For “God is love,” (1 John 4:16).

(1) *Water in the fountain is the sweetest, and love, in like manner, in God is clearest, for he is the God of love (2 Cor. 13:11).*

- b) Of all the love which is in God, the most transcendent is that which he lets out to Christ.

(1) *Christ is crowned with the flower, beauty, and glory of the Father’s love.*

- c) That love which Christ bears to believers is the same which he had from the Father.

(1) *As it flowed from the Father’s heart into his, so it flows from his heart into believers.*

(2) *It is the same love in nature and quality.*

(a) So, in this is the first thing regarding the transcendency of Christ's love to believers: it is the same in nature as that which the Father shows to himself.

4. If we consider the degrees in which Christ shares his love with believers, we shall easily see it is transcendent in that also.

a) Christ fills the heart of believers with as much love as they can hold.

(1) Therefore, he says, "open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," (Psa. 81:10).

5. Add to these the duration of Christ's love to believers, and this will further demonstrate its transcendency.

a) As the nature is high, and the degree full, so the duration is constant and perpetual.

(1) Having loved his own, he loved them, "to the end," (John 13:1).

(2) In addition to a span of time, this phrase may also indicate that he loves his own to perfection.

(3) Christ's love is once and forever.

(4) It is of the same nature as Christ himself, making it unchangeable.

6. Consider finally the operation of Christ's love to believers, and you will see its transcendency equally demonstrated as it was in its nature, degree, and duration.

a) There is no condition so low to which Christ will not condescend to declare his transcendent love.

b) High love stoops low; and the higher the love is, the lower it stoops.

c) If you consider love's elevation by its condescension, you will observe that the lower it condescends, the higher it must elevate.

d) I think it was merely an imaginative story that reported a great prince who took on himself both the form and employment of a laborer to build a house for his beloved in order that he might visit her.

(1) Let me tell you, it is not fiction, but a reality in Jesus Christ, that out of the height of his love to believers, he took on himself both the form and the employment of humanity, so that he might declare not only his obedience to his Father, but his love to believers.

(2) He emptied himself of royalty and took on the form of a servant, (Phil. 2:7).

(3) Christ temporarily laid aside his regal reputation that his love to believers might be of high reputation.

(4) O, how nobly did Christ's love operate toward believers, when he stooped so low for their sakes!

e) There was no action so base which he did not cheerfully undertake to declare his love to believers.

(1) Royal love must demean itself to perform the basest service in order that it might declare itself.

(2) And this Jesus Christ washed his disciple's feet.

(a) Though he is Lord of all, he made himself a servant to all his disciples that he may not only teach them humility and how to love one another, but also that he may declare the height and transcendency of his own love to them all.

f) There is no failing so sinful which he does not pardon in order to declare the surpassing greatness of his love to believers.

(1) Great love pardons great faults; and the greater the faults, the greater the love by which they are pardoned.

(2) Peter failed grossly when he denied the Lord, his Master.

- (3) *But Christ's love was transcendent when it forgave Peter.*
- (4) *It is the glory of man's love to pass by an offence.*
- (5) *It is much more the glory of Christ's love that shows itself transcendently glorious in its operation by pardoning the greatest failings of believers.*
- g) There was no gift so great which Christ did not bestow on believers. Love gives.
- (1) *Christ gives grace (which is far more precious than gold) to believers.*
- (2) *Out of his fulness we receive grace for grace (John 1:16).*
- (3) *So great was his bounty, and so large were his gifts that he became poor for our sakes, that by his poverty we might be made rich (2 Cor. 8:9).*
- (4) *What greater gift can he give than himself?*
 (a) *Such is the transcendent operation of Christ's love, that he gave himself for believer's sakes.*
7. Consider the person loving, i.e. Jesus Christ who is himself transcendent.
- a) Now consider the people beloved, and when joined with the former, will clearly demonstrate that the love of Christ is transcendent.
- (1) *Who are the believers, that are in this way beloved? Are they of any note or name? Not at all.*
- (2) *Scripture even refers to those whom Christ loves as, "worms," (Isa. 41:14), for we are nothing but poor worms.*
 (a) *"For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust," (Psa. 103:14).*
- (3) *That Christ who is so mighty should love believers so base, that he who is infinitely pure, without spot or blemish, should open his heart to those who are blemished throughout, heightens the love indeed.*
 (a) *This demands a transcendent love.*
 (b) *He that knows how worthless, contemptible creatures are without Christ will quickly conclude that this quality of love certainly passes knowledge.*
- b) If we consider the time of love, either when it was first set, or first given forth, we shall see by this also that it is transcendent.
- (1) *For Christ loved believers before the beginning of time.*
- (2) *Before the earth came into being, love was present in Christ's heart toward believers.*
- (3) *Before the foundation of the world was laid, the foundation of this transcendent love was already in place.*
 (a) *The prophet tells us that Christ's love was first declared when we were most unlovely, when no one should pity us.*
 (b) *But then Christ passed by and it was the time of his love, and so his love broke forth with the light of life (cf. Ezek. 16).*
- c) Lastly, consider that end which Christ aims at in his love to believers, and this will declare it also to be transcendent.
- (1) *Christ's love to believers is its own end.*
- (2) *He loves that he may love; and this makes the love glorious.*
- (3) *All the love which he bestows on you, Christ does not aim at himself, but at you.*
- (4) *He loves you now, that he may love you forever.*
- (5) *The end which he drives at in declaring love in a lesser measure here is that he may declare love to you in a greater measure hereafter.*
- (6) *He makes you vessels of grace in this world, that you may be vessels of glory in that which is to come.*

- (7) *All the glory which he aimed at for himself was the glory of his grace, and that shall be toward you.*
- (8) *Christ delights to set the golden apple of his glory in the silver picture of your good.*
- (9) *He, being love, only aims that men may see the light thereof, and he chose your hearts as the golden candlesticks to set up the glorious light of his love to shine in.*
- (a) *That such an infinite majesty as Christ should love such worms as believers, and that he should set his love toward us before the foundation of the world and shed it abroad in our hearts in the worst of times for our good and his glory as the end, is certainly beyond comprehension.*
- (b) *Oh! Who can consider this without being filled with wonder and crying out, "O the transcendency of Christ's love!"*
- (c) *How it passes our knowledge!*

III. The Text Applied

A. Three Uses

1. Having demonstrated this truth a little, I will now apply this present point in three uses.

- a) Namely, 1) of consolation, 2) of conviction, 3) of counsel.
- b) Inasmuch as Christ loves believers with a transcendent love, believers may be comforted at all times!
- (1) *O believing soul, you complain that the world does not love you.*
- (2) *You may even say the world hates you.*
- (3) *Nevertheless, be of good comfort, for Christ loves you; and the world cannot hate you more than he will love you.*
- (4) *His love transcends the world's hatred.*
- (5) *What the angel told Daniel, I repeat to every grieving soul who lives under the hatred of the world (Dan. 10:19), "Fear not, O man greatly beloved."*
- c) Let this be a word of conviction to sinners.
- (1) *You should be convinced, O sinners, that however you say nobody regards believers, yet there is one who is greater than all who regards them, and that in a high manner.*
- (2) *Know that Christ loves them with a transcendent love.*
- (3) *You break their souls in pieces, you slay them, and you murder them; and yet you say the Lord does not see, neither does the God of Israel regard it (Psa. 94:7).*
- (4) *But be convinced now to the contrary.*
- (5) *The Lord Jesus does see, and he does regard them; and before long he will make you know that no matter how you deal with them, they are dear to him.*
- (a) *You may not love them at all, yet he loves them highly.*
- (b) *"Were you not afraid," God says, "to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. 12:8).*
- (c) *God is amazed that his enemies were not afraid to speak against a man whom he loved so much.*
- d) This doctrine might be a counselor, as it counsels all to seek out a part in the love of Christ above all the loves of the world.
- (1) *O friends, why do you spend yourselves and lay out your souls in the pursuit of that which is not love, at least not transcendent love?*
- (2) *Consider the transcendent love of the Lord Jesus and be counseled to labor to get a share in it.*

(3) O that hearing this truth that Christ loves believers with a transcendent love might make you sick in your souls, until you participate in this love.

B. *Be on fire, therefore, and burn with desire, that you may partake of that love, and that at least you may enjoy that love which those who have are unable to express, or conceive, as it is a transcendent love, a love that passes knowledge.*