

## Christ's Love to the Believer Part 3

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 is so surpassingly sweet, and so infinitely necessary for our souls, that I desire to make further discovery of its transcendency.
  - a) Indeed, Christ's life was one great act of love, begun at his birth and carried on even to the time of his death and ascension.
  - b) If we follow this Lamb in the whole course of his life, we shall see that from the cradle to the cross, to his return to the Father, the entire path was paved with love.
  - c) I shall now touch on three demonstrations which show the transcendency of Christ's love to believers in its glorious fullness.
    - (1) *They are: 1.) his birth and incarnation, 2.) his life and conversation, and, 3.) his death and passion.*
    - (2) *Each of these seriously considered will abundantly demonstrate that the love of Christ to believers is transcendent.*

#### B. First, consider his birth and incarnation.

1. How does Christ's love transcend in this act?
  - a) The low condescension of Christ, in becoming man, overwhelmingly declares the high transcendency of his love to believers.
  - b) Had it not been for the great love in the Lord Jesus, he could have taken on an angelic nature instead.
    - (1) *If Christ had come into the world with tidings of love and life, he might have come as an angel of glory instead of a piece of clay.*
    - (2) *But he passed by the nature of angels and took on himself the nature of man, that in this act he may declare love to believers.*
    - (3) *The apostle tells us in Hebrews 2:16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels..." i.e. in no way and by no means would he take on the angelical nature.*
2. Here I will consider particularly these four things regarding his incarnation which evidence the transcendency of Christ's love: 1.) where Christ came from, 2.) where Christ came to, 3.) how Christ came, and 4.) why Christ came.
  - a) 1.) Where he came from.
    - (1) *Christ was in the heart of the Father, where he lived in his Father's love.*
    - (2) *He came from the presence of his Father to earth to declare God's love to believers.*
      - (a) *John tells us he came down from heaven (John 6:38).*
      - (b) *Jesus Christ from all eternity was in heaven.*
      - (c) *There he had his Father's company; there he enjoyed his Father's love.*

- (d) *There he was blessed in his Father's heart (John 1:18).*
- (e) *He was living in the light of the Father's love.*
- (f) *And being with God, he solaced himself in God.*
- (g) *He occupied that very light and glory in which God himself lives.*
- (h) *And yet he left all this behind for believers' sakes.*
- (i) *He left his Father's house to undertake this long journey.*
- (j) *How long a journey did Christ undertake?*
- (k) *And what paradise of pleasure did he leave to come to believers when he was born?*
- (l) *Surely his affection was great and his love was transcendent to leave for a time the Father's house of love, his Father's heart, to open to believers the fountain of love that was in his own heart for them.*
- b) 2.) But where did Christ come to, when he came from heaven?
- (1) *Was it into some place of comfort and plenty, some land of light?*
- (2) *Was it into some paradise, some land of life?*
- (3) *Was it into some place of pleasure?*
- (a) *Not at all.*
- (4) *The place he came was Egypt, where believers sat in darkness.*
- (5) *It was the wilderness, where believers lived under the shadow of death.*
- (6) *It was into this world, where everything is vanity and vexation.*
- (a) *Christ came here for believers' sakes.*
- (7) *And what transcendent love brought Christ here?*
- (a) *He saw that his beloved ones were in a defiled place, a place which could not be their rest (Micah 2:10).*
- (i) **"I came forth from the Father," says Christ, which was great love.**
- (ii) **But he adds, "I came into the world," (John 16:28).**
- c) 3.) But how did Christ come here?
- (1) *Did he come in pomp with glory?*
- (2) *Did he come with the sound of a trumpet, that all might know that he was a prince?*
- (3) *No, he came to earth in a lowly, humble manner.*
- (a) *As Isaiah 42:2 states, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." In other words, Christ did not come in an outward glorious fashion with pomp, but in a silent way.*
- (b) *He came to do all that for his own, according to the Father's predetermined plan.*
- (c) *And if you consider the history of his nativity, you will say that Christ did not come with any great show; he was born, not as the son of some great queen, but the infant of a poor virgin.*
- d) 4.) Join to all these the end of Christ's coming into the world, and this will exceedingly heighten the demonstration that the love of Christ passes knowledge.
- (1) *Why, for what did he come?*
- (2) *Why did the king of glory come from heaven to earth in such a lowly manner?*
- (a) *The end for which he came was love.*
- (3) *His design was to declare and make known that love of God which had been hidden from eternity to believers.*
- (4) *Therefore, it was that he was born in time, namely, that believers might see and know that love which he had kept for them from before time existed.*
- e) I will in a word mention six particular ends (while omitting others) for which Christ came into the world, and you will see them meet in love at their center.

- (1) 1.) *The first end for which he was born was to redeem the precious souls of believers from the slavery of sin and their bodies from that vanity to which they were subjected.*
- (2) 2.) *Another end which Christ aimed at in his nativity was to be fitted to suffer for believer's sakes.*
- (3) 3.) *A third end for which he was born was that he might be like believers.*
- (a) *Love tends to likeness.*
- (b) *Because he loved us, Christ was born the God-man that he might be like them in all things, whom he loved above all things.*
- (c) *Philippians 2:7 says, "He was made in the likeness of man."*
- (i)** *He beheld his beloved in the form of servants, and he was born the baby of a virgin that he might be in their form.*
- (4) 4.) *Christ in his nativity aimed at another end, and that was to unite himself clearly and convincingly with believers.*
- (a) *Union is an effect of affection, and love desires to unite.*
- (5) 5.) *Christ had yet another end of love, for which he was born, namely that he might be fitted in a more familiar manner to condescend to humanity's limited capacities and sympathize with the infirmities of believers.*
- (a) *Christ desires to converse with them sweetly and to sympathize with them seriously; clearly neither of which he could do as God.*
- (b) *Therefore, God foreordained that he would be born as a man.*
- (c) *Had Jesus Christ took upon him the nature of angels and come into the world as such, his presence would have been frightening.*
- (i)** *Believers could not have borne it.*
- (d) *For this end, therefore, "the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," (John 1:14), so that we might behold the glory of God in the only begotten son.*
- (6) 6.) *Finally, by his nativity Christ elevates our humanity to the level of dignity that we had before the fall, having been made in the image of God.*
- (a) *He was born for this end, to raise high the nature of his beloved ones!*
- (b) *You can now see how the birth of Christ, when thoroughly considered, brings a fresh discovery of the transcendency of his love.*

### c. The second position from which I will demonstrate the transcendency of Christ's love is the life of Christ.

1. I shall speak generally of it, and then I shall discuss in a more particular manner some remarkable passages that relate more specifically to his transcendent love to believers.
  - a) Generally, the life of Christ was a perfect mirror of his love.
  - b) Every aspect of his life exuded his love, and if we put all the actions of his life together, we may conclude that he was born not so much to live as to love.
  - c) There was not a word which dropped from his lips, but it was full of love.
  - d) And for his works which he did, they all spoke love so loudly that the deafest ear might hear it.
  - e) In fact, we may say (as the psalmist does in another case) that there is no speech, nor language, where the voice of his love was not heard.
    - (1) *This thread runs through every act of his life.*
      - (a) *If we begin at the temple, where he disputed with the doctors, and follow him to the mount, where he was crucified by the soldiers, we see the entire path covered with love-roses.*
2. But here I shall instance five particulars and show how Christ in the actions of his life declared the transcendency of his love.

- a) 1.) Jesus Christ, for believer's sakes, experienced all the human miseries of this life.
- (1) *Are you hungry? So was he (Matt. 4:3).*
  - (2) *Are you thirsty? So was he.*
  - (3) *Are you weary? He was too (John 4:6).*
  - (4) *Do you meet with derisions and persecutions?*
    - (a) *The Lord Christ out of his transcendent love experienced all these in his life for you.*
    - (b) *Believers, I urge you to remember that when you meet with any of the miseries of this life, your beloved has already met with them for your sakes that he might sweeten them to your souls.*
- b) 2.) The Lord Jesus submitted to all the duties of religion not only to fulfill the righteousness of the law but to declare the infiniteness of his love.
- (1) *For by it believers may see that at no time does he require more of them than he did himself.*
  - (2) *This is why the yoke of Christ is "easy," (Matt. 11:30).*
  - (3) *His commandments do not appear grievous because he obeyed them first himself.*
    - (a) *There is no duty to which you can be called in the whole course of your life but that your Savior in his life has fulfilled.*
- c) 3. Our Lord, on the whole course of his life, was ever careful to provide and use all possible means for the strengthening of believers' graces.
- (1) *Knowledge and faith are the two great graces for the sweetening of the life of believers, and Christ was very careful to strengthen them.*
  - (2) *Therefore, he chiefly spoke to those things which would strengthen these graces.*
  - (3) *For knowledge, how lovingly did he speak about that which his disciples were able to bear?*
  - (4) *And if he thought they did not understand what he said, how lovingly did he expound all things to them when they were alone? (Mark 4:33-34).*
  - (5) *When they asked him about the meaning of any parable, how lovingly he responded, telling them that it was their privilege as his children to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:9-10).*
- d) 4.) In his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ was concerned more for, and rejoiced more in believers' comforts than his own.
- (1) *When he heard that great voice from heaven, saying, "I have glorified it," (i.e. his name) "and I will glorify it," he said that this voice came not for his sake but for his disciples.*
  - (2) *It seems his end in that request (for that voice was an answer to his prayer) was not his glory but their good.*
  - (3) *And therefore, not rejoicing himself in the excellent glory of that voice from heaven, he speaks to them, and applies it to them, professing it was for their sakes (John 12:30).*
- e) 5.) Lastly, it must be also considered that with the last action in his earthly life he declared the transcendency of his love by putting up more requests on behalf of believers than for himself.
- (1) *You know the prayer in John 17.*

(2) *And if you observe it, you shall find that although in the beginning he prays for himself, "Father the hour is come, glorify thy son," yet apart from reiterating this request in verse 5, he shuts himself out of all the rest of the prayer and spends it wholly for believers.*

(3) *And what glorious things he requested on their behalf, that the Father would keep and preserve them (ver. 15), that he would own and sanctify them (ver. 10, 17), that they might be one with the Father, as he was one (ver. 21-22), and in closing, he intreats the Father to admit them to be there where he was, in order that they may behold his glory! And how strongly does he argue for this?*

3. Do you see how easy it is to look at the separate incidents throughout the life of Christ and to note in every single one his transcendent love to believers?

#### D. The Death of Christ

1. But I must now speak a word to the death of Christ, and you shall see this also as a lively demonstration of the truth that the love of Christ to believers passes knowledge.

a) But where shall we begin his passion?

b) And at what part of it shall we enter into this demonstration?

c) Shall we go with him into the garden where it began, or shall we ascend Mount Calvary where it ended, or shall we speak of what he suffered in the high priest's hall?

2. How transcendently sweet is our Savior's love beginning in the garden where he was arrested.

a) Believers see him there, when his soul began to be sorrowful and very heavy, and listen to what he said, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," (Matt. 26:38).

b) Tell me, saints, what manner of love is this?

c) Indeed, the heat of your Savior's love was such that it allowed him to bear the heat of God's wrath, so much so that he sweated clots of blood (his veins leaked his lifeblood under the pressure and tension he experienced while the cold air congealed it).

(1) *And this was only the beginnings of his suffering.*

(2) *For your sakes, believers, you would be blind if you cannot see his matchless love in this.*

3. Let us follow our Lord now from the garden to the high priest's hall, where he encounters the hideous outcries and rude rabble against him.

a) Was it not love that stopped our Savior's ears and silenced his tongue, that he would not reply?

4. Let us now follow Christ to Calvary.

a) See him nailed to the cross for your sakes, and tell me, does this sight not confirm this truth, namely that the love of Christ passes knowledge?

b) Surely, believers, Christ's hanging on the cross, then breathing out his last breath, and pouring out his heart's blood in a shameful, cursed, and tormenting way for your sakes is enough to make you cry out, "O the depth of his love!"

c) And he that cannot learn the transcendency of Christ's love to believers here is worse than a dunce.

(1) *"Greater love than this hath no man that a man lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:13).*

(2) *This topic is more fitted to meditation than expression.*

- (a) *And yet if we meditate on it for the whole of life, we can never reach its height.*
- (b) *The thoughts of Christ's life are swallowed up by the thoughts of his death.*

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Three Uses

1. At present, I shall offer but three uses to help you in the application of the transcendency of Christ's love to believers.

a) 1.) First, stand and wonder, believing souls, at this love.

(1) *Indeed, it's fitted much more for wonder than words.*

(2) *Think about what I have said and let your thoughts dwell upon its meditations.*

b) 2.) Lament! O believers, lament when you consider that regardless of how much Christ loves you, you are too apt to neglect his love.

(1) *One holy man wept when he saw his heart so dull that he could not consider the love of Christ as he should and would.*

(2) *And truly, who can consider with a dry eye the neglect of our thoughts of the transcendent love of Christ?*

(3) *Does Christ love you so much, and yet you think of him so little?*

(4) *Can you spend days and weeks reading fictional stories of love and yet not have an hour to meditate on the real, regal love of the Lord Jesus?*

(5) *What small returns of love does Christ receive from you in return?*

(a) *He loves us richly; but, alas, we love him poorly.*

(b) *His love passes knowledge; none can understand it.*

(c) *But our love, in a sad sense, passes knowledge too, for none can perceive it.*

(d) *How little do we forsake for Christ, when he forsook all for us?*

(e) *Well, I urge you to sit, and sigh, and say, "O! How we ignore the love of Christ!" He was born, he lived, and he died out of love for us.*

**(i) But we are so far from dying for Christ that we scarcely are willing to live for him.**

c) 3.) Thirdly, in as much as Christ loves you with a transcendent love, be content even if you do not have the love of men.

(1) *It's a shame that any who are the beloved of Christ should mourn for not being loved by man.*

(2) *Why should the king's daughter weep because the servants scorn her, because the king himself embraces her?*

(3) *You should rest, satisfied and content, in Christ's love that is so transcendent.*

(4) *Drink waters out of your own cistern! Christian, rejoice with the Lord who loves you! Let him be as, "the loving hind and pleasant roe; let his breasts satisfy thee at all times," (Prov. 5:19).*

(a) *Do not mourn for the loss of creature love, but rather be ravished always with his love.*

(b) *Bath yourself in Christ's heart and be content with his love.*

(c) *Be reminded that the love of Christ for you passes knowledge, and you cannot be discontented at the lack of love from any or all the creatures.*

(d) *It is a sign that the love of Christ passes knowledge and that its value is transcendent for in the absence of all other loves, you cannot help but be content and satisfied with this.*