

Christ's Love to the Believer Part 5

By John Durant (1620-1686)

Eph. 3:19

I. The Text Opened

A. Eph. 3:19

1. "And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."
 - a) Labor to know this gospel, and you shall know enough, not only regarding salvation but also to the perfection of your knowledge.
2. Christ, who is the wisdom of God and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, is fully and clearly revealed in the gospel.
 - a) By studying to gain knowledge of it, we shall come to the knowledge of him.
 - b) Of all knowledge, the knowledge of Christ is most sacred, so it is most satisfactory.
 - (1) *What concerns you is that you know the love of Christ passing knowledge.*

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: that it is necessary for every Christian to know the transcendent love of Jesus Christ.

1. We should strive to be able to measure both the length and the breadth, and to scale the height and to sound the depth of the love of Christ.
 - a) Christ's heart is a very glorious mine of love, and it beckons us to dig very deep into it and not content ourselves with a bare discovery of that golden ore, or vein of love, which is at the top of the mine and in which we may easily discover in the very letter of the gospel.
 - (1) *Rather, it calls us to attain to the deep, mysterious discoveries which saints by the light of the Spirit come to attain.*
2. We should also endeavor to gain an experiential knowledge of this love.
 - a) And certainly, the knowledge of the love of Christ ought to be not only a head knowledge, but a heart knowledge, an experiential knowledge.
 - b) To apprehend the knowledge of the love of Christ more clearly, we should first note that this knowledge is of extreme importance.
 - (1) *There are many things that may be expedient to know, but none are of such importance as the love of Christ.*
3. The knowledge of Christ's love is of necessary importance for every Christian.
 - a) Some truths may be of necessary importance for some persons who are anointed with a higher anointing and employed in a more special way (as officers in the church, etc.).
 - b) But this knowledge we speak of is of necessary importance for every soul that is named by the name of Christ.
 - c) And especially every soul that is united to Jesus Christ ought to labor for a solid knowledge of the love of Christ.
 - (1) *All are necessarily bound, and the responsibility lies upon them all to gain some understanding of the love of Christ which passes knowledge.*

(2) *I am not saying you should gain this knowledge exclusively, shutting out other truths, but as inclusively, and eminently driving at this in a peculiar manner.*

(a) *And as Christ said with reference to doing those things, you ought to have done that one especially, while not leaving the other undone.*

(b) *I say that regarding the knowledge of the love of Christ, you ought to labor for this diligently, as it is more special and of necessary importance.*

(i) *But at the same time, you should not neglect the knowledge of other gospel truths as if they were of no necessity or no importance at all.*

d) Never did Christ speak love more fully and more freely than when he was on the cross.

(1) *Now then, if Paul determined to know nothing but this; we may safely conclude, both from his determination for himself and his desire for the Ephesians, that the knowledge of Christ's transcendent love is of necessary importance for every Christian.*

4. I shall offer some reasons to make this point yet clearer.

a) First, the knowledge of the love of Christ contains in it the sum of the gospel, as Christ is the sum of the gospel, and love the sum of Christ.

(1) *God so loved the world that he gave Christ, and Christ so loved the world that he gave himself.*

(2) *And these truths contain in them the marrow and pith of all the gospel.*

(3) *Loving the Father fulfills the law, and loving Christ fulfills the gospel.*

(a) *You have done the law if you love God sincerely, and you understand the gospel if you know Christ's love soundly.*

b) Secondly the knowledge of Christ's love is of necessary importance because it contains in it the highest motive to duty.

(1) *You will obey with the sweetness that is in your own spirit and with that acceptance of God even if you do not act from a principle of love.*

(2) *The knowledge of the love of Christ is what chiefly enflames our love to him.*

c) Thirdly, Christ's love is the fountain of a believer's life, and therefore it is of necessary importance for a believer to know it, in as much as he cannot live without it.

(1) *This is life eternal, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.*

(2) *If it is essential for the soul to live, it must also be of necessary importance to know Christ's love, because he cannot enjoy the one without the other.*

(3) *Paul says, "I live by the faith," (faith is simply a higher degree of knowledge of the love of Christ), "of the Son of God, who loves me."*

(4) *As Moses pressed the Israelites to the sincere keeping of the law, "for it is your life," in like manner may we urge Christians to the serious knowledge of Christ's love for it is our soul's life.*

d) Fourthly, the knowledge of Christ's love is the foundation of a soul's joy and the Christian's comfort, and therefore of such necessary importance.

(1) *The reason why the saints are sometimes so sad is because they do not know the love of Christ, at least in all its dimensions.*

(2) *For this reason, peace is joined with love.*

(a) *"Peace and love from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ," (Eph. 6:23).*

(b) *The hearts of believers will be at peace if they fully understand the love of Christ.*

(3) *The soul is sad when it does not see the fullness of the love of Christ.*

e) Fifthly, the knowledge of Christ's love is of necessary importance because it gives rise to Christian thankfulness.

(1) *Thankfulness springs from this fountain of Christ's love.*

(2) *Those souls most thankful for the love of Christ are those who understand it most; ignorance begets ingratitude, but knowledge makes thankful. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!"*

(a) *Men will not be thankful for what they forget; neither can men remember what they do not know.*

(b) *All that Christ looks for from the saints is that they acknowledge the transcendent love he bears to them.*

(c) *You are bound, believers, to thank Christ for his love, and you will never desire to cancel that bond as long as you know the transcendency of that love with which he has bound you.*

(3) *Christ's love is the legacy he has left Christians.*

(a) *Ask the widow whether it concerns her to know what her husband left her.*

(b) *Ask the child whether it is necessary to know what his father left him, and they both will say "yes!"*

(c) *Why, believers, your everlasting Father and your soul's husband, Jesus Christ, has left you nothing but his love. Surely it is necessary that you should know it.*

5. Next, as the soul is filled with the knowledge of the love of Christ, so it is filled with the fullness of God.

a) You empty creatures, does it not concern you to be filled with divine fullness, the fullness of God?

b) Surely you will say, "yes!" Then know that you should be well acquainted with the love of Christ, for without that you cannot be so filled.

c) Some have thought that knowledge is nothing but a union between the object and the understanding.

(1) *Observe how the apostle therefore joins these two in the text – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, "that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

(2) *Every drop of this knowledge of the love of Christ tends toward filling the soul with the fullness of God.*

(3) *Surely therefore to be filled, and to be filled with all the fullness of God and the knowledge of Christ's love so advantageous, must needs be a thing of special importance for every Christian to labor to know.*

III. The Text Applied

A. Briefly now let us turn to application.

1. Notwithstanding the fact that the knowledge of the love of Christ is essential, it has been little studied.

a) Men have been very diligent to search after other truths, but slow in searching after the knowledge of Christ's love.

b) Indeed, much of the law has been discovered, but little of the gospel, (especially in this point of Christ's love).

c) Surely it is very sad to think that the knowledge of the love of Christ, being of such necessary and high importance, has been so little inquired into.

2. Secondly, we may lament not only because this knowledge has only been studied slightly, but especially because that after all Christ did to show us this love, very little is gained.
- a) Beloved, the heart of Christ may be compared to a glorious book in which the mysterious history of his transcendent love is written.
 - (1) *But alas! Who is able to open this book to discover its mysteries?*
 - b) When we come to heaven, we shall then be in a state of more perfect knowledge of the love of Christ.
 - (1) *But alas! Even then we shall never be able to comprehend his love in its full perfection, that is, as fully as it may be known.*
 - (2) *Indeed, then we shall apprehend it in the perfection of our knowledge, in so far as it can be known by the finite knowledge of creatures.*
 - (3) *We must consider that while the knowledge of the love of Christ is of necessary importance, it has been little pursued by many; and even when we make the greatest effort to search after it, we shall never be able fully to attain it, which is lamentable indeed.*
3. This truth may also be useful in reproving those who neglect to study the knowledge of the love of Christ altogether.
- a) Few men diligently study the Bible, and less study the light and luster and glory of the gospel, the love of Christ to believers.
 - b) And I cannot help but think those blame-worthy who in these times flaunt their abilities to hammer out some of the more controversial truths of Scripture, and yet neglect the study of his love which is of such necessary importance.
 - c) But much more are those to be reprov'd who study neither the one, nor the other, but spend all their time and energies in controversies and niceties.
 - (1) *They busy themselves with needless questions while neglecting this one necessary thing, namely, the knowledge of the love of Christ.*
 - (2) *Be reprov'd, you who spend your energy obtaining superfluous knowledge while neglecting to study the knowledge of Christ's love, which is of greatest importance.*
4. Lastly, we shall add a word of exhortation to stir believers to study the love of Christ.
- a) You who have spent, or rather misspent many a precious hour reading romances and fond histories of feigned loves, yes, you who spend all your time with some matters of importance, but still neglecting this; be stirred up now to devote yourselves to the study of that which is sweet and necessary, namely the study of the love of Christ which passes knowledge.
 - b) You must understand that my desire is that you labor to be well versed students in this business.
 - (1) *I would not have you content yourselves with generalities but labor to make a particular discovery of the love of Christ in its substance, its circumstances, and its various actions and declarations.*
 - (2) *And remember that this knowledge includes in it all that knowledge which is necessary to be known for salvation.*
 - (a) *As Calvin has well observed, this knowledge is both safe and sweet; it is not the kind of knowledge that will puff up the head; this knowledge purifies the heart.*
5. Now I shall offer some means to help you and motives to encourage you.

- a) Remember that the least beams of the love of Christ have so much light in them that they will be very sweet, and every piece or part of this knowledge will be of very special worth.
- (1) *For this reason, the low and imperfect knowledge of the love of Christ (if experiential and spiritual) is of infinitely more value than the high and perfect knowledge of ten thousand things besides.*
- b) Let me add one more note: that it is possible for you to attain to a very sweet and satisfactory degree of this knowledge.
- (1) *But what, you may ask, shall I do to attain a satisfactory degree of this knowledge of the love of Christ, so that I may be able to say, as it is in the text, that the love of Christ passes knowledge?*
- (2) *For that I shall offer you some directions concerning the means and how you may obtain the knowledge of the love of Christ, and also concerning the manner in which we should carry ourselves in that study.*
- c) For the means, I shall name these particulars.
- (1) *First, be diligent in reading the gospel.*
- (a) *The Bible in general gives testimony concerning the person of Jesus Christ, and also in some measure concerning his affection to the saints.*
- (b) *But the gospel demonstrates the love of Christ to believers in a more ample, clear, and satisfactory way.*
- (2) *Secondly, if you would know the love of Christ, be sure to labor to get into the heart of Christ.*
- (a) *That soul who knows little of Christ's love in its power and sweetness and spirituality, knows only Christ in his head.*
- (b) *And without the knowledge of Christ in his heart, he is still a stranger to his love.*
- (3) *Thirdly, consult with believers.*
- (a) *Ask those objects of his love about the love of Christ to them.*
- (b) *They that have experience of his love can best inform you.*
- (4) *Fourthly, study your own experiences.*
- (a) *Consider how Christ has dealt particularly with your own soul.*
- (b) *Remember how long he waited for you while you were still in sin and at enmity with him.*
- (5) *Lastly, add prayer to all these.*
- (a) *It is the choicest wisdom to be wise in the knowledge of Christ's love.*
- (b) *And if you lack this wisdom, James gives you his advice, "ask it of God," and if you ask God for a wise heart in this matter, he will not deny you, for he gives liberally to those who ask.*
- (6) *Go to the Lord Jesus and remind him of his promise.*
- (a) *Tell him that he has promised to send his Spirit, and that when the Spirit is come, he shall show Christ to the soul.*
- (b) *Ask that he would shed his love abroad into your heart, that you may be able with all saints to comprehend the height, and the depth, and the length, and the breadth of the love of Christ, and that you may be able also to know that love which passes knowledge!*
6. Having thus given some of the means by which we may attain the knowledge of Christ's love, I shall now add a word or two concerning how we should behave ourselves in the use of this means, while we study the knowledge of Christ's love.
- a) First, be very exact.
- (1) *Precision is requisite in all studies, but especially in this.*

- (2) *Gather up all the crumbs and filings of the gold of Christ's love.*
 (3) *The more exact you are in this study, the clearer you will be able to comprehend Christ's love.*
- b) Secondly, be loving.
- (1) *Those know most of Christ's love to them who abound most in love to him.*
 (2) *You would do well to observe the context of this text in Ephesians 3:17-19.*
 (a) *For the apostle said that you, "being rooted, and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length, breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, etc."*
- c) Thirdly, be very admiring in all your study; let all your reading be mixed with admiration at every love passage of Christ.
- (1) *Sit and meditate at every word of love; stay and wonder; adore the glory of that light which appears in any beam of love.*
 (2) *And in the admiration of that love which does appear, cast yourself at the feet of Christ and cry out, "O the depth of love in thee! O the riches of the love of thy heart!"*
- d) Lastly, when you find yourself unable to comprehend the transcendency of this love, imitate the philosopher and cast yourself into that sea of love which you would attempt to fathom or sound, and yet are unable to.
- (1) *Let that love comprehend you, which you cannot comprehend yourself.*
 (2) *Immerse and drown yourself in that vast ocean of your Savior's heart, and because you are not able with any measure to sound the depth, sink your very soul that it may be able to taste that which your study will not allow you to see.*
- e) I might add that all the time you spend in this study will be very delightful, and very profitable, and you will have no reason to regret any of it.
7. Consider the times in which we live.
- a) How little love is there in these days!
 b) Surely, the love of many has grown cold and is little practiced.
 c) Though many complain of the lack of love, and seem to force the exercise of love, yet where is the man that makes it the sweetness of his life to let others taste the sweetness of his love?
 d) Surely while there is such little love among men, it is even more essential that we study the love that is in Christ.
8. Finally, especially consider the sweetness that the knowledge of the love of Christ will bring to your soul in any case.
- a) Little do you know what comfort is wrapped up in the knowledge of Christ's love.
 b) How often does a thought of this revive the spirits of the fainting saints?
 c) With what composure of spirit is a believer able to behave himself in any tribulation when he is without the knowledge of the love of his Savior?
 (1) *Without the knowledge of this love, nothing will be sweet.*
 (2) *But with the knowledge of his love, nothing can be bitter.*
 (3) *And this is that which we shall come to as the last thing observed from these words, namely, to let you see how sufficient the love of Christ is for supporting believers in any tribulation.*