

Christ's Love to the Believer Part 6

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 fulness of God."

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: that spiritual knowledge of the transcendency of Christ's love towards his own is of special efficacy to keep our hearts from fainting under any troubles.

1. He that is skilled at all in the knowledge of the times may well see that these times in which we live are very sad.
 - a) In these times what can be more suitable to our thoughts than to consider that which may serve to support our spirits.
 - b) Believers would be wise to resort to something that is able to keep them from buckling under tribulations.
 - (1) *Indeed, our Lord Jesus, out of the riches of his mercy, has prepared and provided rich and glorious support for those souls of his.*
 - c) Paul was much about the furtherance of the joy and comfort of believers.
 - (1) *This is what he is driving at in these words on behalf of the Ephesians, lest the news of his troubles burden them to the point of causing them to faint.*
 - (a) *So he bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, pleading with him to give them the knowledge of the love of Christ that so by it, their spirits may be kept from fainting, either at the news of his, or the fear of their own tribulations.*
 - (b) *I suppose you easily see both the foundation and the proof of this point in this place.*
2. First, consider that the apostle supposes the Ephesians' hearts were apt to faint at their tribulations.
 - a) In the 13th verse, his desire that they might not faint clearly intimates this.
 - b) Indeed, the children of faith are not only prone to fear but are apt to faint in those fears.
3. Secondly, observe how his desire that they might not faint causes him to make his request known to God in prayer, that God would keep them from fainting.
 - a) "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus, that you might not faint."
 - b) I bow my knee to him who alone can support your spirits.
4. Thirdly, consider, that among the rest of those things which he prays to God for on their behalf, he also asks that they may know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.
 - a) And indeed, the very spirit and strength of all that the apostle prayed for in the former verses on their behalf comes to rest in this last.
 - b) This is, as it were, the last remedy the doctor has to give his patient.
 - (1) *For if this fails, the doctor has nowhere else to go.*

(a) *In the same way, you may easily see that this text serves as a stronghold for this truth as well as solid proof of its substantial importance.*

(b) *Now what is that strength of the inward man by the spirit, but that divine and spiritual joy which is through him.*

(i) *The joy of the Lord gives strength (Neh. 8:10).*

5. Now it is easy to demonstrate that the chief ground on which the Holy Spirit builds that joy in the hearts of believers is the shedding abroad of the love of Christ in them.

a) Christ promised to send his spirit as a comforter to believers, saying that “He,” (i.e., his Spirit) “shall take of mine and show it unto you,” (John 16:15).

(1) *Now what is there in all of our Lord Jesus Christ of sweeter efficacy and power which the Spirit can take and declare to believers than his love which passes knowledge?*

b) Secondly, as a means to keep the Ephesians from fainting, the apostle prays that Christ may “dwell in their hearts by faith,” (verse 17).

(1) *Now the strength of this comfort lies in the knowledge of Christ’s love.*

(2) *But the soul may say, “yes, but will Christ dwell in my heart? I want to believe it, but what ground do I have for such a belief? He is the high and lofty one, and I am a poor creature. He is not only the brightness of his Father’s glory, but the fulness of the Father’s holiness. Will such a pure person as he is truly come and dwell in such a polluted house as I am?”*

(a) *Now all this reasoning is quieted, and this doubting easily resolved, by the knowledge of Christ’s love.*

(b) *For he that knows the love of Christ knows how willingly Christ comes into the heart of a poor believer, and how that daily and even hourly he stands at the door knocking for entrance.*

6. Firstly, in what does the knowledge of Christ’s love consist, or what kind of knowledge of the love of Christ keeps the heart from fainting?

a) In general, I hinted at it in that expression, “the spiritual knowledge of the love of Christ,” i.e., a knowledge of Christ’s love that the soul has by the revelation of the Spirit shedding abroad that love on the spirit of a believer.

b) As the carnal knowledge of Christ’s person is not saving, neither is it sweet; so, neither is the carnal knowledge of his love.

(1) *It is the spiritual knowledge of his person, and the spiritual knowledge of his love, which furthers the everlasting happiness of a soul hereafter, and the sweetness and comfort of a soul here.*

(2) *It does not consist in its bare notion.*

(a) *All divine knowledge (whatever it is) is without any efficacy if it is nothing but the mere consideration of it.*

(b) *The virtue of the knowledge of the love of God causes the soul to be patient in waiting and, by consequence, not fainting in times of trouble.*

(c) *This is why God tells us to direct our hearts toward his love (2 Thess. 3:5).*

(i) *It must be born in the heart.*

c) The right knowledge of the love of Christ chiefly consists in two areas.

(1) *First, in a particular application of the love of Christ to the soul by faith.*

(a) *The soul should be able to say of the love of Christ, “it is mine! For what is all this to me, if it is not mine?”*

(2) *Neither does the love of Christ comfort any if it is not mixed with faith, i.e. particularly applied to their own souls.*

(a) *“This is a faithful saying that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,” (1 Tim. 1:15).*

(b) *Though the knowledge of the love of Christ is the balm in Gilead which cures the sin-sick soul, it is of no benefit at all unless it is taken and particularly applied by faith.*

d) Secondly, once this knowledge is rightly and particularly applied, a serious meditation on it is essential to suck out its sweetness to the heart.

(1) *The psalmist said, “My meditation on him shall be sweet,” (Ps. 104:4).*

(a) *Though the love of Christ is surpassingly sweet by nature, if it is not meditated on, it will not be sufficient to keep the heart from fainting.*

7. The knowledge of the love of Christ assures us of an eternal reward.

a) If we patiently endure sufferings and tribulations, we have the promise of eternal life and happiness with our Savior.

b) Moses did not faint in the midst of all the afflictions endured while leading the people of God out of Egypt because he was assured of the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

c) Notwithstanding his great tribulations, Paul was kept from fainting because he was assured of a crown of life which was laid up for him.

d) And even Jesus Christ himself was enabled to endure the death of the cross without fainting because of the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2).

8. The knowledge of the love of Christ produces this assurance.

a) The soul that knows how dearly Jesus Christ loves him, and what transcendent affection he has toward him, will believe that God will fully and gloriously reward him for all the tribulations he endures for him.

9. A full acceptance of this rest in Christ is very effective for keeping the soul from fainting under troubles.

a) The heart is apt to despair when it is tossed up and down.

b) Unstable souls are apt to fret and to faint because they do not and cannot rest in God.

c) Hear the exhortation in Psalm 37:7, “Rest in the Lord, fret not yourself.”

(1) *Men fret and faint because they do not rest in the Lord.*

(2) *This is how the knowledge of the love of Christ causes me to rest in him and keeps me from fainting.*

10. Divine joy is forever effective in keeping the soul from fainting under trouble.

a) There is a strengthening power in spiritual joy, and the knowledge of Christ’s love produces that joy which keeps the heart from sinking under sadness.

b) Such a knowledge of the love of Christ goes to the heart and refreshes the spirit of a believer.

(1) *As the fear of God is enough to keep from us from evil, so the knowledge of the love of Christ is enough to support us from fainting under trouble because it goes to the heart and cheers the spirit.*

(2) *For the efficacy of the knowledge of Christ’s love has the power to make a man forget all his tribulations.*

(a) *A soul that can make application and meditation of the love of Christ remembers his troubles no more.*

(i) *Indeed, his love is our life, (Gal. 2:20).*

B. Secondly, this doctrine is cause for lamentation also.

1. How sad is it to see that though this love of Christ is so necessary and beneficial to believers in any trouble, yet they neglect it and make no use of it!

- a) They have this precious jewel in their hand and are not even aware of it or how to use it.
- b) It is lamentable to see how believers leave this fountain of living comforts and seek after other cisterns, even broken cisterns, that neither have, nor can hold, any comfort in them.
- c) That which is worst of all is when Christ offers his love, they refuse to take it.
- (1) *How often does Christ open his heart to the believer and let him see love written in the golden letters of his free grace?*
 - (2) *How often does he implore the believer to look and live, to contemplate and take comfort from it?*
 - (3) *How often does Christ say, "Soul, I love you, I love you with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn you into this wilderness of trouble, that here I might speak comfort to you, where none can help you?"*
 - (a) *And yet how sad it is to hear believers say that they will not believe it, though their souls might be comforted by it.*
- d) This love made him suffer for sin, and this love makes him continue to pardon sin every day.
- (1) *He shows the transcendency of his love in pardoning our sin.*
 - (2) *You might think, "But I not only have much sin; I have little grace!"*
 - (a) *It does not matter, believer.*
 - (b) *The love of Christ may comfort you regardless of your sin.*
 - (c) *You think that grace is the cause of love, but you are deceived.*
 - (i) ***Grace is the effect of love.***
 - (ii) ***Christ does not love because there is grace; but he gives grace because he loves.***
 - (3) *Transcendent love gives the soul consolation in any tribulation in which you find yourself.*
 - (a) *"In the world you shall have tribulation," (Christ says), "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and in me you shall have peace."*
 - (i) ***Transcendent love gives a smile for every frown, a kiss for every suffering, an embrace for every blow.***
 - (ii) ***This is the nature of his love, so be of good comfort.***
2. Consider that even in death, Christ's love has provided a comfort.
- a) For you shall have your life by losing it.
 - b) If you die for him, you will secure your life.
 - (1) *"Because I live, you shall live also," (John 14:19).*
 - (2) *Being absent from the body is to be immediately present with the Lord.*
 - (3) *In but a wink of the eye, and you enter the land of eternity.*
 - (4) *The place to go for comfort in any tribulation is to Christ's heart, and there you will find in his love a comforting assurance for any tribulations, whether within or without, spiritual or corporal.*
 - (a) *Be directed on all occasions, believers, to run to Christ's love and to comfort yourselves in the consideration of it.*

III. The Text Applied

A. Read, Study, Pray

1. Read, study, pray, do what you can, that you may be acquainted with this love – the knowledge and consideration of which is a comfort in any trouble.
 - a) Labor to assure yourselves that you have a share in this love and a right to it.

- b) Especially strive to see that though you once had no part in it because you were born children of wrath without Christ, yet now because you have been born again by the Lord Christ, you have a share in that transcendent love which is in him.
2. On all occasions run to this fountain of love.
- a) Draw out of it the necessary comforts and healing for any of your troubles.
- b) In all occasions, labor that the love of Christ may keep your spirits from fainting.
- (1) *Consider what times you are in and when you may expect to meet with tribulation.*
- (2) *I cannot assure you that you will receive comfort from the world; neither can I assure you of kind dealings from those who call themselves Christian.*
- (3) *But this I can assure you, if on the words of grace you act in faith and come to Christ, he will certainly sweeten your troubles.*
- (a) *You have heard that there is love in his heart for every believer, and that love is of a transcendent nature.*
- (b) *You have also heard how that it concerns you all to labor and study for the knowledge of it.*
- (c) *And now you hear that if you attain its right spiritual knowledge, it will be very comforting to you in any trouble.*
- (4) *I implore you, therefore, as you prize your souls, as you prize comfort in tribulations, believe, and labor to get a part in Christ; and then know that no matter what your condition may be, or whether the world shall go well or ill with you, you shall still find a friend in Christ.*
- (a) *He will still follow you with a full, free, comforting, and transcendent love.*
- (b) *So finally, let the consideration of the love that is in Christ to believers, and of all the comfort that is in that love in any troubles, prevail with you to look after it and to lay hold upon Jesus Christ.*
- (c) *Then shall you know experientially that the love of Christ passes knowledge.*