



"TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST"
EPHESIANS 3:17B-19A

The love of God:

The source of our salvation (2:4);

The means of breaking down the wall of hostility (2:13-14);

The motivating power of the Christian ethic (4:2, 5:2);

The fundamental command and identifying mark (John 13:34-35)

"Strength" to comprehend;

In what ways does this third request rest on the granting of the first two (strengthening with power leading to a more vibrant "indwelling")?

Christianity has always been—and always will be—a "thinking" religion;

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

ROMANS 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Meditate on what Jesus described as the greatest commandment: to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul *and with all your mind*" (Matthew 22:37). Consider what loving God with each of those faculties (heart, soul, mind) actually means.

The love of Christ expressed emotionally;

MARK 10:20-21

And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him*, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

LUKE 13:34

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

JOHN 11:5-6

Now *Jesus loved* Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, *he stayed two days longer* in the place where he was.

As you consider the love that God expresses to you, how much are those thoughts dominated or guided by your ideas of an emotional expression of God's love for you, as compared to an expression of action (the cross)?

Do you consider the command to "love God and love your neighbor" primarily a command to feel a certain way, or to act a certain way?

The love of Christ expressed in the cross;

ROMANS 5:8

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 8:32-35

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

But God, being rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us*, even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved...

JOHN 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life..."

GALATIANS 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who *loved me and gave himself for me*.

1 JOHN 4:10

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that *he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*.

The cross is the measurement of God's love for His people. However, we most often—whether knowingly or unknowingly—tend to measure God's love for us by our circumstances (life is good means God loves me, life is difficult means God does not love me so much).

How is this a wildly misleading measurement of God's love? What harm can be done to the Christian's soul by measuring God's love by means of our circumstances? What Scriptures shed light on this?

The comprehension of the love of Christ requires every redeemed saint;

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

For our sake *he made him to be sin* who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The immeasurable love of Christ for His people requires every redeemed saint to comprehend. Consider the spiritual tragedy of such a great love going uncomprehended. How does this inform the Church's mandate to give worship to our Master?

The power of knowing this love;

LUKE 7:41-48

⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for *she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*"

The love that surpasses “knowledge”;

What does it mean for our eternity that the extent of the surpassing-experiential knowledge of the love of Christ for His people will never be exhausted? Consider what it will be like for eternity, in which we will never-endingly learn more of the nature and depth of Christ’s love for His people. What will it be like to be the objects of such expression of love?

The change brought by the “fullness of God”;

1 JOHN 4:11-19

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.* God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ *By this is love perfected with us,* so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

Glorifying God: We give Him nothing, but we acknowledge what He is;

PSALM 29:2

Ascribe to the LORD *the glory due his name...*

In light of the revelations of Christ’s love in this passage, how do you think differently on the often-spoken phrase, “God loves you.”

The Glory of God: The Church is the masterpiece of His grace (2:7) and the instrument by which He will be made known (3:10);

Meditate on some of the ways that we undervalue the Church today. How does this inform our understanding of Covenant Church Membership?