

THE EXALTED CHRIST

Our Sanctification with Him
in His Exaltation

by F. B. Meyer

No Copyright

CHAPTER TWO

“THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE

Ephesians 3:19

“Is not the love of Jesus the Holy of Holies unto millions of souls? Is not the love of Jesus the inner sanctuary into which now, as the veil is rent, we are permitted as priests to enter? We stand upon a pavement which is redemption ground, and that ground is laid, every stone of it, in the love of Jesus. We stand between walls of providence and grace, and whether it be the providence of His Hand, or the grace of His Spirit, in either case we are surrounded by the love of Jesus. We stand under a canopy which is bright with glory, and full of mercy. It is a very heaven of heavens to us, but it is a heaven of love, the heaven of the love of Jesus. Whether, therefore, we look up, we look into the love of Jesus, or whether we look down, we look down into the love of Jesus, or whether we look at the right hand, it is to the love of Jesus, or whether we look to the left hand, it is to the love of Jesus. The Oracle is one full of love in breadth and length and depth and height.”

- J. B. FIGGIS

- **“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself”** (Ephesians 1:5).
- **“Quickened us together with Christ”** (Ephesians 2:5)
- **“Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God”** (Ephesians 5:2).
- **“Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it”** (Ephesians 5:25).

WHAT the Song of Solomon is to the Old Testament, that the Epistle to the Ephesians is to the New. It is the fragrant love letter of God to His children, and one of the key-words of the epistle is the word love.

The apostle had not gone far into the epistle before, in the first chapter and the sixth verse, he speaks of **“the Beloved.”**

That is the position in which our Saviour stands to His Father, but in four other places he discriminates the various shades of the love of Christ to us, for we speak now of **“the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.”**

- In the first chapter and in the fifth verse, we have the love of Christ shown to us in foreordination.
- In the second chapter and in the fifth verse, the love of Christ is shown in His identification with us.
- In the fifth chapter and second verse the love of Christ is shown in His blood shedding, and
- In that same fifth chapter and twenty-fifth verse the love of Christ is shown as the Bridegroom and Husband of the soul.

The love that is deathless as His own love; the love that dared to stand together with us before the gaze of all worlds; the love that stooped to redeem us by the gift of blood; and the love to which the strongest, deepest love that ever man had to woman is as the glowworm torch compared to the sun in its meridian strength.

I want to focus my text. It will be of very little service to thee to have a vague intellectual knowledge of that love. I would that thou shouldst hear the Bridegroom say to thee, "I love thee." Oh that there may be a definite apprehension on the part of all!

There is as much love for each as though there were no other being in heaven or upon earth to share the love of Christ. "Thou art as much His care as if beside nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth." It is not at all wonderful, therefore, to be told in the text that the love of Christ passeth knowledge, or, as I suppose the Greek might be rendered, passeth limit. It is illimitable. The love of Christ to thee, and me, and each, is illimitable.

The whole wealth of Christ's heart, the infinite wealth of Christ's infinite heart, is thine to-day as though the sun should shine to light one firefly, or the Amazon flow to water the roots of one daisy. Jesus Christ, who combines the sympathy and tenderness of man with the infinite capacity of God, loves the lowly, weary, sinning, worthless soul with all His force and gentleness and strength. It passes knowledge, and yet we may know it.

That is the divine paradox. A paradox states a truth antithetically. We can know each antithesis. But there is a deeper truth beneath. I cannot touch that deeper truth, but only the antithesis. First, that the love of Christ passeth knowledge; and, second, that we may yet know it.

First, it passeth knowledge.

We would be prepared to believe it because God is always passing out of knowledge. I once heard a scientific man say that he felt himself to be living in a garden, and, from the place where he stood, pathways opened up and out right and left and all round; but whichever pathway he took, after going some few steps, the pathway was lost in the moorland waste, and his progress was barred by the notice, "Further progress is impossible."

If that be the confession of a man of science, how much more shall it be true of us who to-day are standing in a very paradise of love, whilst all around us pathways lead forth to the love of Creation, or the love of Providence, or the love of our redemption, or the love of our foreordination and election?

But whichever path we take, and begin to explore the love of God, we shall discover that His love, like all the rest of His attributes, will soon leave us behind, and we shall find ourselves face to face with the limitation of our ignorance, because this love passeth knowledge.

Is it not well that it should? Do you not think that the sublimity of nature comes from infinite distance and infinite depth? What is it which at night gives to the upward view that sense of magnificence? Is it not the thought of illimitable space? Why do your children love to get down to the seaside? Is it not the sense of space and distance to the far horizon line? So it is with the glaciers blue with depth. There is a sense of grandeur in being loved with a love like this. You may dive into it with no fear of collision, deeper, deeper always, yet it is ever beyond you. Now let us just take three or four texts to show why we cannot know this love.

Romans 8:39 tells us that the love of God is in Christ Jesus. Do not think because it is a man who loves you that you have lost anything of the fulness of the love of God, for the love of God is in Christ, and therefore, of course, the love of Christ must be the vehicle of God's.

One can hardly go further. It seems too wonderful to believe that all God's love is in Christ, and in Christ that it might be tempered and toned before it encountered the delicate organism of our natures. As the sun may not strike on the babe's eye save through the undulations of the ether, so the great love of the infinite God would be our destruction did it not come through the nature of Him who loved the children, who wept over the city, and who allowed the woman to wet His feet with her tears. But you must not think that you lose anything of the love of God because it comes through Christ.

Take yet another text - John 13:1: "**Having loved His own which were in the world, he** (our Lord) **loved them to the end.**" Too often that word is taken to mean that He loved them to the end of His mortal career, surely altogether inadequate. I believe that He loved them unto the uttermost. As much as to say that He loved them to the uttermost possibility of love, that there was nothing in the conception of love which the love of Jesus left unexhausted or unexplored.

Take another text - John 15:9 "**As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.**" Do you want to know how much Jesus loves you? Ah! soul, before thou canst master that arithmetic thou must learn another mode of computation. Tell me first the love of God - the Father to His Son, and I will tell thee the love of the Son to thee. Dost thou wonder at the love of Jesus, sinful, weak, ignorant man? Dost thou wonder that it passeth knowledge?

Or take one thought more from Ephesians 2:7. In this marvellous epistle we are told that God the Father, who loves us in Christ, is going to make His love to us a specimen of love through all the ages.

There are two things which God is going to show to the principalities and the powers of other worlds; the one is in the second chapter and the seventh verse, "**The exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us,**" and the other is in the third chapter and in the tenth verse, "**His manifold wisdom.**" Do you wonder then that it passeth knowledge?

We may gain one more suggestion from the expression saints.

Each saint can only see his side of it. If you ascend Snowdon, you go up from Capel-curig or Llanberis or Beddgelert, and will only see one slope. In order to form a true conception of Snowdon three travelers must start each by a separate route, from Llanberis the one, Capel-curig the other, and Beddgelert the third, and only when the three meet on the summit will they know the whole of the mountain's grandeur.

So the Baptist must come from his side, and the Congregationalist from his side, and the Presbyterian from his, and the Church of England man from his, and it is only when all the saints meet together, and each has caught his own angle-view of the love of Christ, that the Church will understand the whole. It is because our powers are so limited that we cannot take it in.

And yet there is one other thought suggested by saint. We are not holy enough. We must be saints to know the love of Christ, and the more saintly we are the more we shall know, because anything which is not perfectly saint-like casts a blur upon the mirror and dims it. I would we might be quiet a minute, and each say to himself and herself, "It is not simply a feeling of complacency, it is love. If it were complacency God would only like me when I am good. But He loves me. It is not benevolence, that is only a kind feeling. It is better than this. God who fills everything loves me in Christ with a love that **"passeth knowledge."**

You may not feel it, but you must believe it. You may have no responsive motion, but that does not alter it. The earth may wrap itself in clouds, but that does not affect the sunshine; and that you feel weary, depressed, sin-stricken, almost helpless, does not alter or affect the fact that the whole of Deity is pouring out its tides towards you through the channel of Jesus Christ. Is not that enough to banish loneliness, depression, and the fear of ultimately being cast away?

It is impossible that God should ever let one go upon whom He has set His love. The illimitable love of Christ to the soul has sometimes so engrossed and over powered holy men that they have been beside themselves.

I was reading of Flavel, who on one occasion was traveling by himself through the country on horseback. He tells us that he became suddenly conscious of a very sweet and powerful sense of God's personal love to him, so much so that he became oblivious to the road, the country, and all that was happening.

He says, "I did verily think that as I stood there for his horse had come to a stand that if I were in Heaven I could hardly hope to have more blessedness than I then enjoyed."

A passer-by startled him, and he found his way to the inn where he was to spend the night, but he said that all that night his consciousness of being loved by God swept over him wave on wave, and he could not sleep; only he adds, "I was more rested than I had been by many nights of sleep, and I saw in my soul things I had not known."

May it not be that God is wanting to say as much to some of us, but we are so busy, so hurried, and so monopolized by little things that we let the great stream pass by, indifferent to the murmur of its waves.

Though God's love passeth knowledge, yet we may know it.

It is conceivable that a settler should receive many acres, and even square miles, of territory of which he knows but little in its whole expanse; but he may know something of the character of the soil in the few acres which he first enclosed and cultivated. Cannot you see him arriving there?

Settlers wagons pass through Chicago by the hundred a week to the Far West. A man will take his wife and his children, his farm implements and a few household utensils, and travel to the unoccupied lands. He will finally come upon his new estate. Selecting some corner of it, he will erect a shanty to shelter himself and his dear ones; and when he has done all he can in a few weeks of labour; he says to his wife, "Wife, I am going to survey our property." He climbs some mountain, and looks far away to the horizon, or the flashing waters of lake and river, and all is his. How little he knows of the wealth of his estate.

But presently he goes back and says, "Wife, we shall be old and grey before we know all that we possess in this place. But we will begin to cultivate the little plot round our house, and every year put the fence further back, bringing the limit of our experience ever nearer that of possession."

So, men and women, we are settlers upon the continent of the love of God. We only know a little of its coastline, we fringe its shores; but what the wealth of that continent is we shall never know, for it has no limit, no bound, no end. Let us, however, follow on to know and enjoy this wonderful love.

We should know it first as a matter of doctrine.

It is a great thing to increase our knowledge of the love of God by the reverent study of His Word. I have not much faith in a man who discounts doctrine. What the bones are to the body, doctrine is to the fabric of the moral and spiritual life. What law is to the material universe, doctrine is to the spiritual. Get an intelligent knowledge of doctrine, the doctrines of the grace of God, and hold them fast. If you have time additional to that you give to the Bible, study strong books, books that will give you true conceptions of the love of God, and the lines on which it runs, and the laws which it has followed and will follow. We need to know the love of God doctrinally.

Secondly, we should know the love of God by meditation.

I was reading of one called Isaac Andrews, of whom Dr. Calamy writes. He was a devoted minister in the North of England. He wrote a book called *Looking unto Jesus*, which is very sweet and fragrant. It is said that he was in the habit of preaching eleven months in the year, and spending the twelfth in a little hut in the woods, that he might have uninterrupted leisure for meditating upon the love of God to him.

Do you not remember what Rutherford said when he was put into prison?

“My enemies thought that they would put me in prison; but they have put me into the King’s banqueting-house, and the banner of His love has been unfurled over my head.”

Thirdly, we should know the love of Christ experimentally.

That is, we should sit down and ask for the Spirit of discernment to see the thread of love running through the beads of our life. **“Whoso is wise will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.”**

If you read that psalm you will find there is an account of storm, of a march through an arid waste, and of five more different episodes, many of them fraught with pain, and at the end of it the psalmist has what you may call the audacity to say, “If a man wants it he will find the lovingkindness of the Lord in the storm, in the wilderness, and even in the prison-house.”

Let us therefore sit down and let that thought permeate the heart. Have your pencil, if you will, and begin to put down all the manifestations in your life of God’s love to you, and methinks the more you write, like Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the more it will grow on you, and you will fill one sheet of paper and want another, and then another and another.

I would like a man who is disappointed, whose heart is full of depression and desolateness, to try my recipe, to put down in order the manifestations of Christ’s love, the sin which has been forgiven, the iniquity pardoned, the waywardness and wickedness with which He has borne. Oh, man, come sum it up, and I think you will throw down your pencil when you are but half way through the enumeration, and cry, it passeth knowledge.

Lastly sympathetically, i.e., by sympathy.

Kepler, the great astronomer, who laid the foundation of much of our knowledge of the stars, one day exclaimed, after spending hours in surveying the heavens, “I have been thinking over again the earliest thoughts of the Creator,” and surely every time a man sacrifices himself, or takes up the cross for another he is thinking over again the earliest, deepest thought of the love of Christ.

Have you not often felt as though God kept training you? When you first loved that twin-soul, now your husband or your wife, did you not one day say to yourself, “I love, and from my own heart learn what love is”? So in that first attraction to another you woke up to a new realm and cried, “Why I suppose that Jesus Christ’s love to me is something like this, only infinite.” The quality is the same, though not the quantity.

Every time you do a gentle act for another who does not deserve it, every time you lay down your life to save others, every time you endure shame and spitting and scorn to rescue lost women and lost men, in the glow of your human interest, and amidst disappointment and rebuff you say, “Well, thank God, I am seeing deeper than ever I saw before into what Jesus has been feeling for me.” Abraham learnt more of the love of God the day he was led up Mount Moriah than anything else could have taught him. Perhaps there are men and women who have been hearing all this, and who are saying, “Well, well, my life has been so dreary, so perplexed, that I cannot think God loves me.”

I pray you remember a text which says that “we must know and believe the love.”

Standing upon the granite block of redemption and providence, and the blessings which have come to our life, we must dare to face the inexplicable, the dark, and the mysterious; and reason that the pathway of love lies through these also, and when we have traversed them we shall look back on a trail of light. The love of God has never once failed me, and though I cannot see it, or how that trouble which menaces me is consistent with it, it is only the text over again, “**The love of God passeth knowledge.**”

You cannot know it, you cannot tell its great and devious track. “**His footsteps are in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters.**” You cannot always follow Him, but you may always believe that there is love, though it passeth knowledge.

We need a baptism of love to-day. We all need it. Many are leading such a miserable life of repression; they are ever flying to jealousy and hatred and ill-will and suspicion and dislike. Of course we do not admit these things, and yet they incessantly torment us and follow our footsteps, as the dog which we meant to leave at home, but which follows us. And in so far as they are permitted in heart or life they exclude the consciousness of our Saviour’s infinite love.

- Let us absolutely and for ever put away all these wrath, anger, malice, ill-will, and all uncharitableness.
- Let us reckon that such have neither part nor lot in our new resurrection-life.
- Let us give up our ill-will about each and all who may have injured us, or at least tell Christ that we are willing to be channels through which His love may flow to them.

And when this is so, and in no part of our heart there is cherished aught that is inconsistent with perfect love, we shall not only understand as never before the unsearchable love of Christ, but we shall be able to claim a baptism of the Holy Spirit, who sheds abroad the love of God in willing, obedient, and believing souls.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
