

# The Foundation of the Love of Christ – Ephesians 3:18-21

## 1. Seize the Promise of His Love with the Heart

- a. Our foundation is the love of Christ
    - i. The love of God shown in Jesus Christ is the central theme to, not only our salvation, but to the very experience of life on this earth!
      - 1. These two are perfect passive participles, indicating a finished work that has lasting results that God has accomplished for us.
        - a) This source and foundation of the love of Christ is really relating all the spiritual blessings of chapter 1 in application to spiritual growth
        - b) As we see the Reality of the love of Christ for us, we become more Christ-like
      - 2. Rooted – agricultural analogy of a tree
        - a) To produce the fruit of love for each other (One New Humanity), we must be rooted in the love of Christ
        - b) As we reach into and find nourishment from the love of Christ applied to our hearts, we produce fruit *together*
      - 3. Grounded – “to lay a foundation”, as the foundation of a building
        - a) We are being built up in love for one another b/c we have been founded upon the love of Christ (2:20; 1 Cor 3:11)
          - i. Both His love for us (primary) and our love for Him (secondary or responsive)
          - ii. This love produces our love for each other
        - b) God’s love > Christ’s Love > Our love
          - i. This cycle produces the building which glorifies God (2:20-22)
          - ii. This cycle of love goes on for eternity
    - ii. By grasping how great his love is for us, we become more like Christ!
      - 1. Trusting His promises
        - a) Trust that He is *for us* (Rom 5:8; 8:26,31)
        - b) Trust that He *is enough* for our hearts’ joy (Ps 73:25-28)
      - 2. Obeying His instruction
        - a) We obey *because we trust* that He is for us and that He is powerful to supply ALL that we need
        - b) His love is enough
          - i. We don’t trust other things, even good things, to fulfill us
          - ii. The danger is taking good things and making them *ultimate* things, trusting them to bring us joy rather than Christ
    - iii. Knowing the Gospel from the heart is like breathing in life: it is a life-giving, constant exercise of repentance, faith, and joy.
- b. His Spirit gives us the strength to seize as our own how vast and super-sufficient is His love for us
  - i. It is the Holy Spirit’s powerful enablement, given as a gift by the Father, that strengthens our souls to believe in Jesus, to seize His love toward us with our hearts in faith, to fill us up to the fullness of God
  - ii. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability “may be able” to see *how much* Christ loves us
  - iii. “comprehend” comes from the word “to lay hold of as one’s own, to seize”

1. We need strengthened to completely seize onto this truth from the depths of our souls. To cling to it as our own: Jesus loves me completely.
  2. To know what is unknowable  
ILLUSTR: Karl Barth was asked to sum up his greatest thought, to which he replied, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."
- c. To know, experience, and glory in the love of Christ is what it means to be filled up to all the fullness of God.
- i. It goes beyond mere head knowledge (although that must be there, for we do "know") to the soul's seizing of that truth
  - ii. How great is the love of Christ?
    1. How severe is your sin in the eyes of God?
      - a) Death, Wrath, Hell
      - b) Every teaching of God's holiness and justice in the OT and in the NT reveal the depth of God's love in Christ
        - i. The greater we see His holiness and His justice, the greater we recognize the vast extent of His love in our salvation by HIS GRACE
    2. What did Jesus do to remove your sin and its consequences?
      - a) Incarnation, suffering, death, bore His wrath
      - b) Mercy, Grace, because of Love
      - c) Look at the Gospel, from sin and brokenness to redemption and glory, ALL IN JESUS by His grace and through faith
    3. The Cross is the ultimate evidence of the divine love of Christ, where God Himself (Jesus is God) entered into our sin, guilt, brokenness, violence, @#\$%#, in order to redeem us.
      - a) Without the Cross, God is not a God of love
      - b) Without love, there would not be the Cross of Christ
    4. ILLUSTR: "The essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for us. We...put ourselves where only God deserves to be; God...puts himself where we deserve to be." (John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*)
- d. The fullness of God comes with the deep heart understanding of the Gospel and the consequent deep appreciation of the soul is worship.
- i. He is giving us a foretaste of the inheritance, the joy of being in His presence.
    1. No one can see God's glory on this earth, but that is what we're in for and we've been given a foretaste now
      - i. It's incomplete, but it's real, full, and powerful, and our prayer is that it is growing in experience
      - ii. It grows as we apply the truths of the Gospel through our mind to our hearts, our affections, and then to our behavior
      - iii. This is the transforming power of the gospel as we see Jesus
    2. Do we *know* His presence? Do we taste this fullness? Do we feel and live as sons and daughters of God or are we content to live as orphans: with a peace and satiation beyond imagination, but slowly dying because we live as spiritual paupers? Are we praying to this end?
  - ii. This fullness of God is closely tied to His moral excellence (1:23; 4:13)
    1. As we seize the vast immensity of Christ's love we are filled up with character like His (4:13ff).
      - i. The early church's cry was "Κυριος Χριστος" or "Christ is Lord"

- ii. There is an inherent cost involved in love. To say that we love Christ but will not follow EVERYTHING that He said is not to love Christ but to use Him.
- 2. Humility, patience, love, gentleness, etc. are evidence of “being filled up” TOGETHER AS THE CHURCH (1:23) in the progressive growth of the Holy Spirit as we seize the love of Christ with the heart.
  - i. In the next chapters we will see how this moral excellence looks in the church as it flows out of transformed affections
  - ii. We learn to speak the truth, even the hard truth, to one another in love
  - iii. Balance of love/righteousness, justice/mercy, holiness/grace

## 2. What does it look like to seize Christ’s love as your own?

- a. A person that lives this kind of faith is way off of the map of what we’re used to and what the world can even fathom. It doesn’t make sense to the world.
  - i. This person’s confidence is not based upon his performance, or lack of performance, but upon JC’s performance upon the cross and His present presence upon the throne over all of the Universe.
  - ii. She is content in the love of Christ so she does not seek the approval of others to fulfill her
  - iii. Confidence is in Jesus and His work so she PRAISES JESUS and HIS WORK
- b. This person is never hurt badly by criticism (doesn’t bother him, isn’t devastated, doesn’t keep him up late)
  - i. Putting too much stock in what other people think and we’re not trusting in the work and the reign of Jesus *right now*.
    - 1. The world may not care what others think, but they answer criticism by saying “I know what I think and that’s what’s important.” (They fit Reality underneath their souls’ desires).
    - 2. So, you have either a person devastated by criticism (thinking too much of what others think) or a person who can’t accept criticism (thinking too much of what they think)
  - ii. We don’t know how to heal a lack of confidence except with self-righteous pride, and they are both horrible nuisances to us
- c. A boldly humble person accepts criticism and is not devastated by it
  - i. My personal and particular sins are *so great that Jesus had to die* to remove them
    - 1. I am honest and completely transparent in my weakness and need for Jesus *presently and for eternity*
  - ii. Jesus loves me enough that *He did die* to remove them
    - 2. I am at rest and confident in Jesus’ provision for my complete redemption *presently and for eternity*
- d. This person steps out and takes risks for Jesus, because even if she should fail, her performance does not determine her acceptance before God, for Christ loves her unfathomably
  - i. When she is successful, she is not proud or harsh, but rather humble and gentle, seeing that Jesus is the one who is performing any real and lasting change within others, not her.
    - 1. All that she is called to do is proclaim the gospel and to humbly live out the gospel.
  - ii. When he fails, he knows that his performance does not determine God’s possession or acceptance of Him, so he can leave his self-reliance behind and to simply depend on his

Savior's work and deep, deep love. His verdict is still secure in His redeemer, and God's plan is never squelched by our failures. So he will humbly take another great risk for the Lord.

**Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

Ephesians 3:20-21