

## Because He Loves Me How God's Love Transforms Our Identity and Life

### Reconsidering God's Love for Us In Christ

- When did you learn to drive?
- How closely do you pay attention when having to take a driver's education course?
- How closely do you pay attention when you're driving?
- We desperately need the work of the Spirit today.

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*  
~Ephesians 3:14-19

What did Paul pray?

- That we would be strengthened (in the knowledge of how much we're loved), so that Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith.
  - That we would be rooted and grounded in this love.
  - That we would have strength to comprehend and know the love of Christ.
  - So that we would be filled with all the fullness of God.
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- Why should we reconsider God's love for us in Christ?
    - Because our love for Him is responsive in nature.
      - *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 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. We love because he first loved us. ~1 John 4:9-10, 19*
    - Because our faith will grow in direct proportion to our apprehension of His love. 1 John 4:16
    - Because our obedience must be fueled by this love. 1 John 3:1-3
    - Because obedience that is not motivated by love is worthless.
      - *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. ~Galatians 5:6*

# NOTES

- Because obedience that is not motivated by love is worthless. It may be self-righteousness.
  - It may be penance.
  - It may be self-assurance.
  - It may be a way of avoiding Jesus.
  
- Where is this essential perspective most clearly seen?
  - In the gospel of Jesus Christ.
    - The incarnation
    - The sinless life
    - The substitutionary death
    - The bodily resurrection
    - The ascension and continuing intercession and reign of the Son of God
  
- It is this perspective that we lose sight of as we “mature” in our faith.
  - If I said that this was going to be a presentation on the gospel, would you think that it was primarily for unbelievers?
  - Are you more focused on your sanctification or your justification?
  - Do you believe that you need a formula for obedience or a Redeemer?
  - Do you struggle with condemnation?
  - Do you struggle with pride and anger?
  - Do you wonder about God's disposition toward you?
  - Is He angry?
  - Disappointed?
  - Demanding?
  - Overjoyed?

In your pursuit of godliness,  
have you left Jesus behind?

## Because He Loves Me: How God's Love Transforms Our Identity

- *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith ...For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.*  
~2 Peter 1:5, 9
- Where is your attention focused primarily? On your desires? Your sins? Your Savior?
- If I said that this weekend we were going to spend our time thinking about the gospel, would you automatically assume that this is a presentation for unbelievers?
- Why does the incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection and ascension matter to you today?

Are you suffering from a form of spiritual amnesia?

- That even though we believe the gospel, the places where the gospel (the incarnation, sinless life, death, bodily resurrection and ascension of the Son of God) actually intersects with and powerfully affects our daily life, is infrequent.
- For instance, how does 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,"* impact your heart's responses when you don't receive the coveted invitation, when your children disrespect you in front of friends or when your roast fails to cook.
- My identity is that I'm one who's been loved immeasurably by God and have been made one with him, will continually be contrasted with this statement: My identity and self-worth is determined by whether I am popular, respected, a winner, and well-fed.

Why would it matter?

- "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins" (2 Peter 1:5-10).
- It matters because it will have a direct and concrete impact on your sanctification.
- Peter writes that one reason we don't grow in ordinary, grateful obedience as we should is because we've got amnesia: we've forgotten that we were cleansed from our sins.

- You'll be blinded to the realities you need to embrace in order for growth to occur:
  - How can our *faith* grow if all we can see is the record of our failure?
  - Our *virtue* or moral excellence will grow in direct proportion to our apprehension of the fact that we've been cleansed, forgiven and loved.
  - We'll grow in our *knowledge* and acquaintance of him because we won't be afraid of him. In fact, studying and fellowshiping with him will become our delight because he is so delightful.
- *Self-control* will come more easily because the idols that used to draw us away from him will have lost their power to entice. Remember, it doesn't take much self-control to compel loving obedience and service to one who is so wonderful you love to make him smile.
- Our *steadfastness* will grow in response to his steadfast love for us. Especially when we face trials and suffering, when we're most tempted to give up, we won't be blinded by our pain, but will instead see him standing there faithfully before us with nail-pierced hands and feet, making intercession for us that our faith will not fail.
- And finally, we'll *love* because we'll be sensible to the fact that we've been loved. The kind of love God has called us to is responsive in nature, it's not something that we can manufacture on our own. We'll love God because he's loved us and we'll love others for the same reason.

**The Identity Gift. Christ is your life.**

*When Christ who is your life appears,  
then you also will appear with him in glory.  
~Colossians 3:4*

- You need an alien identity because your natural identity will never suffice.
- You are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe. You must embrace this facet of your identity or the gospel will never amaze and empower you.
  - You are more loved and welcomed than you ever dared hope. You must embrace this facet of your identity or the gospel will never encourage, assure and embolden you.
- You are completely forgiven and God has no wrath left for you (Romans 8:1). Can you say with assurance that when the Father looks at you he says, "This is my beloved daughter in whom I am well-pleased"?

You have been given an immense inheritance.

- ...Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

- You have fellowship with the eternal God (Numbers 18:20).

## NOTES

- . . . all the saving events and all the saving blessing of the gospel are means of getting obstacles out of the way so that we might know and enjoy God most fully. Propitiation, redemption, forgiveness, imputation, sanctification, liberation, healing,

heaven-none of these is good news except for one reason: they bring us to God for our everlasting enjoyment of him.

Piper, John, *God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), p. 47.

- You have eternal life (John 3:16).
- You have peace with God (Romans 5:1).
- You have been redeemed from sin (John 8:36).
- Do you live like a foster child or his dear adopted daughter? How would you know the difference?
- Do you feel confident in his presence? Do you run to him when you fail?
- Do you assume you're being punished when you face trials?
- Do you "walk on eggshells" or assume he's just waiting for an opportunity to punish you?
- You have been given the faith you need.
  - The serpent and the Son of God. *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."*  
~John 3:14-15
- Believe on and trust in him.
- Believe that he is as good as he says he is.
- Believe that he is too holy to deceive you.
- Believe that he is too powerful to disappoint you.
- Believe that his love is able to keep you.
  - Don't think your wound is too great.
  - Don't think you're able to heal yourself.
  - Simply look and live.
- Where does this faith come from?

- Our loving God, of course! *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*  
~Ephesians 2:8

- ...even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all of God's commandments and of never having kept any of them, and even though I am inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without my deserving it at all, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is to accept the gift of God with a believing heart. The Heidelberg Catechism

## **Because He Loves Me: How God's Love Transforms Our Life**

- If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.  
~Colossians 3:1
- Be who you are.
- Gospel declarations: You have been raised with Christ; you are seated with him at the right hand of God.
- Gospel obligations: seek the things that are above.
- We must never sever the indicatives of the gospel from the imperatives of the gospel.
- The happy moralist.
- The sad moralist.
- The libertine.
- Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ~Philippians 2:12-13
- Who works, God or us? Yes!
  - We must *always* remember that our works are engendered by God's prior work and that our growth in holiness is completely in his hands.
- We're walking "by faith and not by sight." I must believe:
  - That God continues to love me despite my continual sin;
  - That he has committed himself to my sanctification;
  - That everything I've ever needed to be pleasing to him has been given me in the gospel, by the Son;
  - That I can be bold and courageous in my war against sin because I know that he's forgiven me and continues to love and support me.
- I will complete the work he's given me to do because he's already completed it for me.

- ...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.  
~Ephesians 2:10

## NOTES

Four gospel reasons to persevere in ordinary, faithful obedience:

- ...we do good because Christ by his Spirit is also *renewing us to be like himself*, so that in all our living we may show that we are *thankful to God for all that he has done for us*, and so that *he may be praised through us*. And we do good so that *we may be assured of our faith by its fruits*, and so that by our godly living *our neighbors may be won over to Christ*.  
Heidelberg Catechism #117
- Be who you already are - remember your true identity!
- Be thankful for who you are.
- Be assured of who you are.
- Be who you are before others.
- “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only *faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6).
  - If responsive love does not motivate our obedience it is nothing less than penance. How would you know the difference?
    - First, how do you respond when you fail? Do you spend hours in self-recrimination? Do you beat yourself up over your failures?
- You might judge the motive behind your obedience by the manner in which you respond to trials. Do you think that God is punishing you for your failure to obey? Do you get angry at him for not holding up his part of the bargain?
- Your feelings about prayer will also be key. Do you love to spend time in your Father's presence or is prayer just one more duty on your check list? Do you enjoy the fact that he enjoys spending time with you or are you guilty about your failure to pray enough?
- Our responsive love will only grow as we contemplate God's love for us, primarily in the gospel.
  - “*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*” ~Ephesians 5:1-2.
- Only responsive love has the power to annihilate our idolatry.
- Only responsive love has the power to engender faith and kill unbelief.
- Our “gospelized” obedience must be bathed in the belief that he loves us, that he's supplied everything we need, that he's patient and kind, and that his power energizes us to face the difficulties of life in the here and now.

- *Our glorious new identity in Christ, all the wonderful indicatives in Scripture, must always remain the catalyst, motive and ground for our transformation into Christ's image.*

- *"All progress in the Christian life depends upon a recapitulation of the original terms of one's acceptance with God."*

Stott, John, *The Cross of Christ*, quoted from Williams, Rowan, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, p. 27,  
from Beckwith, Roger and Buchanan, Colin, p. 272.

- Real progress is measured by character change, not memorization of Scripture, witnessing, attendance at meetings, theological knowledge (although it is not less than this).
- "Take courage, daughter, your sins are forgiven."

What we really need to remember:

- *Rather than the truths of forgiveness and faith being ancillary to our lives, everything else needs to be ancillary to them.*

Is Jesus preeminent in your Christianity?

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen.

- Don't shift aside from the hope of the gospel.
- Don't try to reconcile yourself to him through your good works.
- Don't try to appease him.
- Don't think of yourself as a hired servant.
- Don't forget that *everything* is for him and through him! (Romans 11:36)
- Don't forget the future.

Rediscovering first love.

- The Ephesians' work.
- The Ephesians' perseverance.
- The Ephesians' theology.
- The Ephesians' lovelessness.
- *Failing to concentrate on God's love for us in Christ isn't a trivial thing. It will always eventuate in apathetic living. Only the gospel can so invigorate us that we burn with ardor for him in all that we do.*
- Is love for God the overwhelming passion of your soul? It will only be so when you diligently and consistently study and pursue his great love for you.
- The name of Jesus is not only light but food. It is oil without which food for the soul is dry and salt without which it is insipid. It is honey in the mouth, melody and joy in the heart. It has healing power.

*Every discussion where His name is not heard is pointless.*

Calvin, John, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne, Ed., p. 128.