

The Love of Christ

N. Anderson

The following is but a short meditation of the love of Christ. That it is impossible to give a comprehensive account of such love is borne out by a reference to the Ephesians 3: 18, where the apostle prayed that, among other things, we might "know the love of Christ which *passeth knowledge*."

John 11: 36, "Behold how He loved him." Whilst we can speak of His love in the past tense, how blessed to know that it is an abiding love. John, in Revelation 1: 5, spoke of the love of Christ as an ever subsisting reality. In regard to our sins he said, speaking in the past tense, "Who has *washed* us from our sins;" but in regard to His love which had led Him to do the cleansing work, once for all, he said, "To Him who *loves* us" (N. Tr.). Praise His Name, He loves and shall go on loving His own.

John 13: 1, "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end," He loved them through everything — through Israel's rejection, the treachery of Judas, the denial of Peter, the forsaking of all the disciples, the agony of Gethsemane, the mockery of Gabbatha, and the crowning suffering of Golgotha. Nothing could abate His love. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of Songs 8: 7). How often have we sung with deep feeling: —

"But Thy love remains that entered

Into death to make us Thine."

The suffering, darkness, and sorrow of the cross are gone, and gone for ever; but the love that took Him into and through it all abides for ever.

As the abidingness of His love has been attested by the sufferings He has endured — sufferings beyond our telling — so we may be encouraged by the knowledge that no suffering through which His own may be called to pass, nor circumstance however testing, can ever diminish His love. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" This is faith's confident challenge. "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that love us."

Paul added his own triumphant testimony, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And we are taught in Romans 8: 1 that we are where divine love is resting — "in Christ Jesus."

Blessed as all this undoubtedly is, do we so rise in the appreciation of this deathless love of Christ as to enter into the knowledge of His love to the Father? If we learn His love to us it is in the way of learning that He has made known the Father. He has been revealed by the Son, and by the work of the cross the way into the Father's presence has been opened righteously. The Father would have us draw near in the company of the Son of His love. He would have us there for His pleasure, joying in Him and perfectly at home before Him. As we enjoy this rich and lasting portion — the sweetness of eternal life — the Father's heart is gratified, and for this He gave His only begotten Son.

He who has manifested to us the Father's Name has also communicated the truth of part with Himself; the blessed prospect too, of being with Him where He is, and He has taught us of the new day which was to dawn as a result of His taking His place on high — the Spirit's day, with its unrestrained ministry of heavenly blessing. He moved out from the upper room to the outside place — the sphere of fruitbearing and witness — declaring as He did so, "that the world may know that I love the Father; and

as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence" (John 14: 31).

So He went out to the garden, over the brook Cedron, with the shadow of His impending death at Calvary lying over His spirit. Cedron had long centuries before witnessed the tears of the rejected anointed of Jehovah, 2 Samuel 15, but what shall we say of the rejection and betrayal of the Father's Beloved; of the Gethsemane sorrow with its sweat of blood — not recorded in John's gospel — but we are told that over the brook Cedron there was "a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples."

Yet, wonder of wonders, He paused on the way to the garden and lifted up His eyes to heaven. Surely His heart was also in unclouded communion with the Father. In the midst of the many petitions in His wonderful prayer, given to us in John chapter 17, He breathed out in the hearing of His own that one day the world shall know that the Father loved the saints even as He loved the Son.

How precious for us to be let into such knowledge; may such divinely revealed verities awaken a response in all our hearts.

John 13: 1, the Son loved His own through everything.

John 14: 31, the Son loves the Father, and in devoted obedience would go into death for the glorifying of the Father. Having thereby laid the basis for the richest blessing of His own, He would ascend up where he was before and inaugurate the new day by sending down the Holy Spirit. He would also have us know that the great desire of His heart is to have all His own sharing with Himself in the glory which the Father has given Him, and that in that day love would be displayed in glory — the love of the Father to the Son, and the love of the Father to the saints. Then shall His own see Him in the unique pre-eminence of His eternal Sonship and appreciate fully that the Father's love to the Son predated the creation of the world. That love belonged to the sweet relationship in which the Father and the Son had ever subsisted. As the love was pre-time so also was the relationship. In the conscious enjoyment of these blessed revelations we long for the realisation of the blessed hope which He has given us in those memorable words; "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24).

As we wait may we worship the Father, in spirit and in truth, seeking grace to follow our beloved Lord in the responsive power of holy love.