



THE
LOVE
OF
CHRIST

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“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5:31-32).

This is a Great Mystery - that is, it is a GREAT TRUTH revealed to us! What an immense consideration this is for every child of God.

This quotation is from Genesis 2:24 - the building of Eve. What is this “Great Mystery?” Surely it is not that a man leaves father and mother to be joined to his wife, there is no mystery in that! The great mystery - (i.e. great truth) is that Christ should leave His Father and cleave to His wife, that He and she should become eternally one. This great truth is a demonstration of the love of Christ.

There is truly great comfort to the soul in the fact it is stated that the man cleaves to the woman and not the woman to the man. For it is not my feeble grip of Christ, my weak cleaving to Him that will ever give me assurance and security. Rather, it is His mighty cleaving in a deathless love to me that gives assurance and joy and leads me to ever and always say — “O Eternal Lover and Faithful Lord!”

“The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

In order to more fully grasp the meaning and worth of such love, the Love of Christ, we must go back to that garden scene of Eden in Genesis chapter three. There Adam and his wife are seen in a condition of unbroken fellowship and joy. Into the garden the tempter came. He did not go to the man, why? Surely from 1 Timothy 2:14 we learn that Adam could not be deceived for Adam is the figure of The Coming One (Romans 5:14). Satan went to the woman and she believed the lie, disobeyed, ate and died (i.e. was immediately separated from God as out of communion and fellowship with God). Physical death was to follow.

EVE DECEIVED - ADAM DISOBEYED

Then follows the great test for Adam. What will Adam do? He, standing in his own innocency, unfallen and in communion with God, sees the wife, the gift of his God lying in misery, bondage and death with a yawning gulf separating them forever. Adam is but a living soul, unlike The Last Adam Who is a Life-Giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). Adam could not quicken her. Will he cleave to His God and Father or will he leave his Father and cleave to his wife? "For this cause shall a man leave..." Adam deliberately, undeceived, and consumed by his love, left his God that he might cleave to his wife. Eve fell by deception, but Adam fell by affection. His love for her was so great that he descended to her level and became partaker with her in her ruin and death. They both died.

What a picture we have here of the Last Adam, Christ. He Who left His Father that He might reach and cleave without sin to His Bride. Not to cleave to her in her sin and shame (and thus become like her) but that He might impart to her His own life and lift her up to His own level and glory.

Our own wonderful Lord in His consuming passion stooped from heights no finite mind can scale, to depths no finite mind can fathom but He stooped to conquer!

HIS STOOP TO CONQUER

As we look at His marvellous steps downward as traced in Philippians 2, we see Him leaving the glory above to stoop not only for time but for eternity!

Here in this chapter so very holy and precious to God's own people, we must seek grace to tread reverently and softly before God.

"Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6,7). "Robbery" is better translated "held fast" ; that is, a thing to be prized or "grasped at." The word "form" translated "form of God" means "actuality." Is He the very form - actually God? Yes! Then He took the very form of a slave. Equal, for as the Son of God He is always God, yet He has taken a place of submission for the purpose of redemption and as Servant He will serve forever. Yet always He is God.

Here then we have the first step in the descent of His long weary, costly search for His Bride. It is tremendous to contemplate. Co-equal and co-eternal with God, of His own voluntary will He makes His choice and makes it for eternity! If He refuses to take the form of a servant, to accomplish redemption, then He and she are separated for ever. Will His love stand this awful stoop? His is a love for which if a man offered all he possessed it would still be utterly insufficient (Song of Solomon 8:7). So for her sake He humbles and empties Himself and takes the lowest place, the place of a slave. O what love is this — love no tongue can tell nor teach, nor pen can write. Love that no heart can reach. “No love like His.”

THE INFINITE STOOP

But if this be an all-loving stoop - is it possible to stoop even lower? Yes, He “must needs” stoop lower for He has not yet fathomed the terrible depths of her fall.

“He was made in the likeness of men.” As we trace the humiliating steps of His awesome descent into her abyss of ignominy, shame, woe and death, we must seek by God’s help to guard His holy humanity from being misunderstood.

“Men’s likeness”, what does it mean? Does it mean, “Just like me?” “Just a man like you?” A thousand times “No”.

The word likeness is used three times in the New Testament.

1. “Likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3).
2. “Likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7).
3. “Likeness of His death” (Romans 6:5 in relation to baptism).

This last quotation gives us the true meaning of “likeness of men.” Note that baptism is said by God to be “the likeness of His death.” Would anyone suggest that it was His death or even anything near to a sameness of His death? Never! Thus as baptism cannot by any means or possible stretch of the imagination be made to mean the same thing as His death, neither can His spotless, untainted, and untaintable humanity be made the same as mine. In His humanity there was the great mystery of Godliness. God manifest in the flesh. Not God and man, but “Immanuel - God with us.” Our great Saviour, but also, and at the same time “our great God” (Titus 2:13). He is “the seed of the woman” yet “Christ who is over all God blessed forever” (Romans 9:5).

Here, however His humanity and mine must part company. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and called by God, "That Holy Thing." As He lay in the manger God's testimony of the little Babe is; "He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). "He knew no sin" (1 John 3:5). He was as holy on the cross as He was in the manger and as holy in the manger as He is in the God-head. "That Holy Thing, " the incomparable Christ, a Humanity that knew no seed of mortality, no taint of sin; no sin, no sinning, taintless and untaintable, sinless and impeccable. The One concerning Whom God said, "I have laid help on One Who is Mighty" (Psalm 89:19). This One is Satan's conqueror, the Stronger than the strong man (Luke 11:22). He is The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace and my Redeemer.

To our Lord Jesus, the One to be adored forever, it could well be asked, "Have not Thy steps of humiliation and Thy stoop to incarnation been enough to reach the loved Bride? Can she not be linked with Thy perfect humanity and thus be lifted up to that higher place?" No! She lies deeper, still further removed. No union or oneness with man is possible in incarnation.

And being found in man's fashion, for He is truly Man, a real Man, we see Him weary, hungry, sorrowing. He knew what it was to live amidst poverty throughout His entire time here. Suffering in His perfect sympathy, suffering for righteousness sake, suffering as He came in touch with sin and its consequent evils. Suffering the anticipation of His soon-to-be sacrifice, for He was the only Man born with the express object to suffer and die as the Sin-offering upon a Cross. Suffering in all points as we are, yet sin apart. He was tempted like as we are (Hebrews 4:15). Note, sin apart. He never knew the temptations of sin!

THE DEEPER DESCENT

Being found in man's fashion He did not reach her. He must descend still lower if He is to reach her level. Therefore as man, "He humbled (emptied) Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8).

At last He has reached her. He has come to where she lay. He has taken her guilty curse and shame as His own. He bears it at Calvary and there instead of her, He pays the terrible price. She dies in Him. She is buried in Him, quickened with Him, raised with Him, and seated in Him at God's right hand. She died with Him to live with Him and when He Who is her life shall appear, she shall appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

As we trace this amazing descent of the Son of God for the object of His love, we often sing:

“None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Or how dark was the night which the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.”

Thank God, His love is stronger than death, waters could not quench it, floods could not drown it (Song 8:6).

Calvary, dark Calvary could not separate her from His matchless love.

THE FINAL TEST OF CHRIST'S LOVE

We have now to see this mighty love of Christ tested to the utmost.

“Then cometh the end when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God...and when all things shall be subdued unto Him that put all things under Him, then shall the Son Himself be subject that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Here we have the eternal subjection of the Son. What does it mean? It is the final test of His love. In order to really understand this fully, read the full account of the Hebrew servant in Exodus 21. Here we read that the term of his service was seven years. A complete and perfect service. He may then go out free - as free as his master! If he brought in a wife with him as he served, she too may go out free with him, but if his master gave him a wife, he must go out alone. This then is the final test of his love. If he says, “I love my master, my wife, my children, I will not go out free,” then he is taken to the doorpost, his ear bored and he serves forever.

Believer and Child of God, remember and rejoice that our Adorable Lord is the great Anti-type, the perfect Hebrew Servant. “Behold my servant whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isaiah 42:1). “Mine ears hast Thou opened” (Psalm 40:6). “The Lord God hath opened mine ear and I was not rebellious” (Isaiah 42:6). These words from Isaiah 42:1 were applied to Christ when He came up out of the waters of baptism in Matthew chapter three.

The time has now come in His service when He has completely fulfilled the Father's will and completely finished His work. When the great purposes of service are accomplished will He now go back free, back from the responsibility of service? His Bride, what of her? He cannot make her into God's form and God's equality. He, equal in the God-head has taken a place of submission for the purpose of redemption and as a Servant He will serve forever. Yet He is God over all - always God!

She cannot go free. He came in by Himself, His master gave her to Him. If He goes out, He must go out alone. Now comes the greatest test of all - the final eternal test. Listen, O my own soul - listen beloved fellow-sinner saved by such wondrous grace - in breathless wonder listen. Will His love, the love of Christ stand this test?

He speaks, "For her I became as a Man, a Slave. For her I died a Malefactor's death. For her I made atonement - and put away sin by the sacrifice of Myself forever. For her sins I was condemned upon the cross. Her life I quickened. I lifted her from the lowest place of shame, condemnation and a future of hell, to the highest heights of My acquired glory. My vast possessions and wealth inherited by Me as Man glorified I hold and value for her sake that I may lavish them upon her forever. She is, life of My life, soul of My soul, joy of My joy, My glory and My crown. For her I wore the crown of thorns. I endured the fierceness of the wrath of God against her sin. Because of her I carry with me the death-wounds unto everlasting and count them amongst My most precious possessions."

"No, I love my master, I love my wife, I will not go out free. For her I became Man, a Servant, for her I remain a Man, a Servant forever. I have her in My own image, sinless and perfect and throughout the eternal ages she shall be by My side, holy, blameless in love."

She and I in that bright glory –
 One deep joy shall share
 Hers to be forever with Me–
 Mine that she is there.

* * *

What shall we say and do in view of such unreserved love and sacrifice?

Remember that Joseph's brothers of old, misused him, misunderstood him and mistrusted him: Joseph who had saved their lives with a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7); Joseph who had given them the best of everything; Joseph who had given them to live in goodness and bounty for 17 years in Goshen.

The saddest thing in all the world is unrequited love!

O Lord, deliver us from all such unworthy unthankfulness.

The apostle Paul, who knew himself, redeemed at such a price recorded that "The love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge that if One died for all, then all were dead and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

May this, the love of Christ so constrain us that we render to Him our love, our lives, our hearts, our all!

- We love Him for He first loved us.
- It was love that decided that the Hebrew servant would be a servant forever.
- It was love that brought Him down to earth to do His Father's will.
- "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it."
- It was love for us and me individually, "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me."

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