

Comprehending the Love of Christ?

Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would comprehend the love of Christ.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:14-19 NKJV).

From this prayer, we learn that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. It is impossible for us to get to the end of Christ's love. We can never find it out completely. Therefore, we know that the degree to which Christians comprehend the love of Christ will vary. The good news is that there is always more of Christ's love for us to comprehend. We can look forward to knowing much more of it as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And it appears that the more we comprehend of it, the more we will be filled with the fullness of God. This should entice every Christian to relentlessly pursue the knowledge of Christ's love.

Based upon all of this, we can also assess the degree to which we know the love of Christ by evaluating the amount of true joy that currently floods our souls. After all, if comprehending Christ's love results in being filled with all the fullness of God, then we should find it difficult getting up off our faces. If we really comprehend the love of Christ, shouldn't we be so blown away by it that our hearts are overflowing with praise and thankfulness to Him? I have had moments like this but in general, this is not the normal state of my heart. So, what is my problem? Why does it seem that I generally do not comprehend Christ's love as I would like to comprehend it?

Now I believe that many factors influence a Christian's ability to comprehend Christ's love but here I want to focus on just one of them, our response to the trials that come our way. Whenever a trial comes to us, we are immediately faced with a temptation to receive it by faith or get angry and complain in our hearts about it. As Christians, we cannot simply assume that the trial is coming to us randomly because the Bible teaches that God is sovereign over all things. The very nature of God and what He has declared about Himself comes to bear on how we view our trials. From what He has revealed about Himself, we know that God is good, God is wise and God cares deeply for His children.

“And we know that for those who love God, those who are called according to (His) purpose, He is working all things together for good” (Romans 8:28).

Because of all this, we cannot remain neutral in our attitude towards the trial coming to us. If we kick and scream about a trial, it means that we suddenly stopped believing the God is loving, God is good and God is wise. Or, perhaps we stopped believing that God is sovereign over the trial, as if the trial is happening randomly. Whether we face it or not, if we are angry about a trial, we are angry at God Himself because He is the one who arranged for it for our good according to Romans 8:28. Whenever we are angry about our situation, we are accusing God of either being mean, not knowing how to run things, or simply not caring for us as He should.

I write all this to point out that whenever we respond poorly to a trial, our ability to comprehend the love of Christ is impacted. How can we perceive Christ's infinite love while at the same time accuse Him in our hearts of being unloving by arranging for this trial? How can we expect to be filled with all the fullness of God under these circumstances? How can we expect to have deep abiding joy?

If we want to be filled with all the fullness of God and experience deep abiding joy, we simply must learn to trust God in the midst of our trials. We have no choice in this matter. God is training us to trust Him by bringing the trials into our lives. Unless we are content to harbor bitterness in our souls as miserable people, we must plead with God every day to give us a greater measure of His Spirit so that we see the trials through His eyes and begin to value them for the outcome for which they are designed. We need to grow up.