

JESUS LOVES ME? EXPERIENCING THE HEART OF CHRIST

BEN KREPS

In the world of Christian children's songs, I think we can all agree that one song stands above the rest in prominence and familiarity. It's a song that first appeared in the 19th-century book, *Say and Seal* by Anna and Susan Warner. In the story, a young boy named Johnny is sick. His teacher, Mr. Linden, visits him at his sickbed. Struggling to communicate, little Johnny whispers a request for his teacher to sing. Mr. Linden responds by singing these words:

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so:
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak but he is strong.

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Yes, it does, and Jesus comes to us through the Scriptures and tells us so in the Gospel of John when he says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love" (John 15:9).

In this verse, Jesus unfolds his very heart—the essence of his love and his desire for us to experience his love. Dane Ortlund writes in his valuable book *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*,

The Jesus given to us in the Gospels is not simply one who loves, but one who is love; merciful affections stream from his innermost heart as rays from the sun¹ . . . In short: *it is impossible for the affectionate heart of Christ to be over-celebrated, made too much of, exaggerated*. It cannot be plumbed. But it is easily neglected, forgotten. We draw too little strength from it.²

Let's not neglect or forget the love of Christ. Instead, let's celebrate and draw strength from the one who is love and who loves us with the deepest affection.

*There has never
been a moment
that the Father has
wavered in his love
of the Son.*

The Essence of His Love

John 15:9 is simply stunning. Most of us probably don't think this way on a daily basis. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." What kind of love does Jesus have for his own? The same love that the Father has for him. What kind of love is that?

It is Eternal. Jesus describes the eternal love that the Father has for the Son later in John when he says, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). There has never been a moment throughout all eternity that the Father has wavered in his love for the Son.

It is Perfect. As all that is in the Father is perfect and free from fault or blemish, so his love for the Son is perfect and unwavering.

It is Boundless. As God in all his glory and attributes cannot be contained, so the Father's love for the Son is boundless in its feeling and expression. As the 19th-century preacher Archibald Brown once wrote: "Grasp, if you

1. DANE ORTLUND, *GENTLE AND LOWLY: THE HEART OF CHRIST FOR SINNERS AND SUFFERERS* (WHEATON, IL: CROSSWAY, 2020), 27.

2. *IBID.*, 29.

can, what that love is that dwells in the heart of the Father toward the Son—and then, and not until then, will you know what is the love in the heart of Jesus toward you.”³

This love is an ocean with no distant shore, a mountain with no peak or summit, a galaxy with no boundaries, a vast plane of beauty that stretches to eternity. This is the essence of the love of Christ for you—the same love that is in the heart of the Father for the Son.

The Experience of His Love

This love of Christ is not merely a feeling in his heart but the impetus for his cross. Romans 5:8 says, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

His great love is for the sinner, for the undeserving. If we want to know the greatest expression of his love, we must look to the cross on which the Prince of Glory died to atone for our sins and to bring us to God. This is the fullest revelation of the love that is in his heart for you, and this love, revealed at the cross, flows from the heart of the risen Christ and reaches into our daily lives.

As Jesus reveals the essence of his love, he also invites us into a lifestyle of experiencing his love. “Abide in my Love” (John 15:9). Take residence in my love. Make your home in my love. This is the most gracious of invitations to the undeserving. As we see his great love and follow him in trusting obedience, we enjoy a deepening experience of his mighty love. Wonderfully, we learn that the Holy Spirit is eager to help us to experience the love of Christ when Paul provides a prayer for all of us to pray, asking that the Spirit may give us “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” (Eph. 3:18-19).

The Effect of His Love

Have you ever considered that Jesus is even more concerned about your joy than you are? He says two verses later in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be full.” The

3. [HTTPS://WWW.GRACEGEMS.ORG/29/CHRISTS_LOVE_FOR_HIS_REDEEMED.HTM](https://www.gracegems.org/29/CHRISTS_LOVE_FOR_HIS_REDEEMED.HTM)

effect of understanding the essence of his love and abiding in his love is fullness of joy. He aims to implant his joy into us. This is a joy that reaches into our daily experiences of failure, suffering, and loss.

“What,” I think I can hear one of you saying, “Do you mean to say that Jesus loves me just as much when I am depressed, and deep down in the dark valley—as when I am full of sunshine and standing on the mount of God?” Yes, I do, dear friend, quite as much. *His love was never begotten by anything he saw in you*—and can therefore never be changed by anything about you.⁴

In your difficult trial, in seasons of suffering, in experiences of failure and the battle against sin, Christ has not and will not ever stop loving you. He will never abandon, never forsake, never cast you out. His love is such that if your entire world collapses, he will still be present to love you and to take you to himself forever. That is reason enough for the fullness of joy in every season!

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Let every Christian hear the Savior and know and believe his Word. He loves you; he loves you now and forever.

4. IBID

BEN KREPS

Ben Kreps is senior pastor of [Living Hope Church](#) (Middletown, PA) and serves on the Emerging Nations Leadership Team.