

Psalms for a Summer Season: Psalm 67

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[0 : 00] The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.! It's not money, it's love that makes the world go round.

! To love and be loved is the fulfillment of life. We stand in awe of love, the love of friends, the love of couples, the love of children.

The greater the love, the greater the awe in which we stand before it. 400 years ago, the English Puritan John Owen wrote these words.

The chief brightness of glory consists in the glory of divine love. The chief brightness of glory consists in the glory of divine love.

The greatest of all loves is found in the way God loves us. And his love for us is the chief brightness of his glory.

[1 : 09] Never do we stand more in awe of God than when we realize how much he loves us. In Galatians 2 verse 20, the Apostle Paul writes, The Son of God loved me.

He loved me. Time and again in the New Testament, we read of how Jesus loves us. Over the last few weeks, we've been examining some aspects of the glory of Christ.

And this week, we arrive at the chief brightness of his glory, the glory of his love. We do so rather like Moses.

Approach the burning bush in Exodus, we take the shoes from our feet, for we're on holy ground. Never shall we reach higher than this, that Jesus loves us.

If over this week, over these weeks, this is all we remember, it will have been worth it. Jesus loves me.

[2 : 19] Our lives must revolve around this fundamental truth without which the world for us would be no world. The Son of God loved me. We stand in awe before this one cardinal truth.

The Son of God loves me. I want to consider three things this evening about the love of Jesus for us. First, it's an eternal love.

Then, it's a costly love. Then, it's a forever love or a never-ending love. The chief brightness of glory consists in the glory of divine love.

Let's put it more plainly. And not just hear it and understand it, but let it sink deep into our hearts so that it changes the way we think.

Jesus loves me. This I know. For the Bible tells me so. First of all, then, it's an eternal love.

[3 : 26] Jesus loves us with an eternal love. I love my wife very dearly. But I didn't always love her. I met her when I was 21.

So, for all those years before that, I can't honestly say that I loved her. My love for her had a beginning at a free church youth camp where we were both serving as leaders.

Great place to meet your partners. The greatest love I'll ever have for another human being had a beginning in time and space.

But the love of Jesus for us had no beginning. There was never a point at which Jesus began to love us. He has always loved us.

Before the sun began to shine, the tides began to turn, Jesus loved us. Before the first human being ever drew breath into his lungs and the first child was ever born, Jesus loved us.

[4 : 27] Before there was anything other than God, he loved us. In Ephesians 4, Ephesians 1 rather, 4 through 5, we read that before the foundation of the world, in love he predestined us.

Now, we're all familiar with the Bible's idea of covenants. A covenant is a set of promises God makes. We have the covenant of works, or as John Murray called it, the covenant of life in Genesis, made between God and Adam, in which God promises life to Adam upon his obedience.

We have the covenant God made with Abraham, that through his descendant the whole earth would be blessed. We have many other covenants in the Old Testament, including God's covenants with Noah, with David, and with Solomon.

In the New Testament, we have the great covenant of grace made between God and human beings, that if anyone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be saved.

And the condition of that covenant is faith in Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. This is the covenant of grace, and in it we rejoice and find life.

[5 : 53] But underlying all these covenants in the Bible is a deeper, eternal covenant, made not between God and human beings, but within the persons of the Godhead himself.

And we call this the covenant of redemption. The covenant of redemption. In the timeless depths of eternity, before the foundation of the world, in the council of the divine trinity, because he loved us, God drew up a plan for the salvation of sinners.

Love for us moved him to plan our salvation from judgment, condemnation, and death. And this plan centered on the coming of God the Son in the likeness of human flesh.

The coming of God the Son to live among us, and give himself as the ransom price for our sin and guilt. That covenant of redemption involved the death of God the Son as the substitute for his people.

Love drove the plan, and love moved our Lord Jesus to willingly volunteer, obey, and play his part.

[7 : 17] The covenant of redemption was made in the wise council of the Trinity between Father, Son, and Spirit, that the Son should pay the price of our sin and guilt.

And this covenant of redemption is flavored and dominated by the love of Christ for us. Before the foundation of the world, before the first human being ever walked the earth, Christ loved me and planned to give himself for me.

Before Eve ever reached forth and took the fruit, and Adam plunged us into the curse, Christ loved us and purposed to die for a sinful humanity.

This is the covenant of redemption. And it forms the bedrock and foundation of all the other covenants of the Bible, including the covenant of grace. Now, we don't have to fully understand all this, but what we do need to know is that because God had no beginning, there never was a time when God did not love us.

All human loves have a beginning, but the love of God for us had no beginning. Now, the Apostle Paul often used songs of his age to illustrate his point.

[8 : 43] So, I'm going to use a modern song, cheesy song, to illustrate the truth that the love of Christ for us has no beginning. The song's chorus says, Loving you is in my DNA.

You're now whistling it to yourself, aren't you? Loving you is in my DNA. With all reverence, we can say, Loving us is in the DNA of Christ.

He can no sooner stop loving us than he can stop being who he is. God didn't start loving us upon making the covenant of redemption.

God made the covenant of redemption because he loved us. As Peter will later say of Jesus, he was foreknown before the foundation of the world.

Loving us is in his DNA. There's a famous Southern Gospel song sung by the Gaithers, which says of Jesus, When he was on the cross, I was on his mind.

[9 : 52] True, but deeper still. Before the foundation of the universe, I was on his mind. And this is where it all moves from theology to practice.

Because it's one thing to say that before the foundation of the world, Christ loved his church, and that's why he came and that's why he died for us. It's another thing to say that before the foundation of the universe, Christ loved me.

And that's why he came and died for me. But that's how Paul says it in Galatians 2.20, The Son of God loved me.

We may not love ourselves very much. And we may feel that no one else loves us, although that's never true. But the greatest of all truths is that before the foundation of the world, Christ loved you with an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love.

His love for you had no beginning. It was written into his DNA as God. Before the universe was formed, you were on his mind and in his heart, and he loved you.

[11 : 09] Whoever you are, you were dearly loved by Christ. This is the chief brightness of his glory, that despite all our weakness and sin, he loves us.

As Paul was saying in Philippians chapter 4, think about such things. Rather than listen to the inner voice of fear in your heart, tell yourself this daily, tell yourself this hourly, despite what others may say of me and despite what I may say of myself, Jesus has always loved me.

And he always will. It's an eternal love. But the second feature of the love of Christ is that it's a costly love.

It's a costly love. Love is many things, but love always gives. Love visibly expresses itself in giving. In this verse, the apostle writes, the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me.

The love of Christ for us consists in that he gave himself for us. This was the eternal plan, but in time and space, 2,000 years ago, on a small hill just outside the present-day city of Jerusalem, the Son of God gave himself to the suffering and the cruelty of death.

[12:39] In so doing, the Son was following in the footsteps of his Father, whose love for us resulted in giving. Remember how in the famous words of John 3, 16, we read, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.

If someone loves, they will give, and the more they love, the more they'll give. This is how we know that we truly love someone, that we're willing to give to them and for them.

Jesus said, Greater love hath no man than this, that he lays down or gives his life for his friends.

So, love and giving are always costly.

It will cost us to love and to be loved. If John Owen is right, and I'm sure he is, that the cheap rightness of glory consists in the glory of divine love, then we must also expect that the chief glory of Christ's love will consist in the costliness of his self-giving.

Last week from Philippians 2, we consider together the glory of Christ and his condescension. He who was in the form of God made himself nothing, exchanging the form of God for the form of a slave, for us, and because he loved us, he freely gave up all the privileges and blessedness of being God the Son.

[14:16] He emptied himself. Deeper down he went as he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of a cross. There's the cost of his love for us, that willingly, freely, voluntarily, he gave himself, body and soul for us.

Ephesians 1 tells us that in love he predestined us, but it also tells us that in him, Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

No one has ever paid a price like Jesus did for us. No one has ever loved us like he did. As he carried the cross to the place of crucifixion up the Via Dolorosa, he was not only carrying a length of wood, he was bearing a world of sin and guilt on his shoulders.

My sin was there as he walked on that road to Calvary's tree. And so was yours. He was bearing it to death for us, for there was no other way for the punishment I deserve to be borne other than that he in his love should bear it for me.

The physical death Jesus died was just a tiny portion of all he suffered. The mental, emotional, and especially the spiritual torment goes beyond words.

[15:46] For those few hours as darkness covered the earth, Jesus was being condemned by his Father on account of our sins, descending into hell for us, enduring the justice of God for us.

He who knew no sin was becoming sin for us. In one of his recent sermons, David Parker said these words. He said, in these words, for us is the whole of the gospel.

In these words, for us is the whole of the gospel. Everything for us. nothing held back. Being a parent is one of life's greatest privileges, but love's got a cost, doesn't it?

When I see one of my children suffering, not only is my heart moved to do whatever I can to make it better for them, but I realize that if it meant they would be better, I would be more than willing to suffer in their place.

I would wish it was me who was suffering, and not them. Perhaps this gives us a wee glimpse into the loving heart of our Lord as he made his way to the place of crucifixion, had nails driven into his hands, and endured the torturous death of the cross.

[17:13] He loved us so passionately that just like parent and child, he was more than willing to take upon himself our suffering if it meant that we would live, he would die.

Stuart Townend's famous song, The Power of the Cross, says these words, this, the power of the cross, Son of God slain for us, what a love, what a cost, we stand forgiven at the cross.

The greatest of loves will pay the greatest of cost and demand the greatest of prices. The greatest of loves is the way Christ loved us, and the cost demanded was the greatest of all, his spiritual

death for us.

So, Paul says, the Son of God loved me, and he gave himself for me.

Now, we know that Paul had not always been the mighty apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. He had once been Saul the Pharisee, hated of the Gentiles, hated of Christ, and persecuted of the church.

[18 : 37] a self-righteous, hypocritical zealot, the first century equivalent of the Taliban, a more disgusting man you'd never have met.

But it was Saul the Pharisee, the Son of God, loved and gave himself for. It was not the faithful apostle of Christ, but the hypocrite.

There was nothing lovable about Saul, but the Son of God loved him and gave himself for him. In the same way, Christ loved the us who were unlovable, the us who didn't love him but wished that he'd never existed, the us who stood in the crowds in Jerusalem that day and added our voices, as together we cried out, crucify him.

He didn't love us and give himself for us because we were worthy of his love, because of what lovable people he could make us into. He loved us and gave himself for us as we were.

You know, it's sometimes cruelly said of people that they've got a face only a mother could love.

Now, of all of us, it's true that we've got sinful hearts only Jesus could love.

[19 : 57] But love us he did and gave himself for us he did. What does this mean for us tonight? It means at least this, I shall pray with all my might to love myself the way Jesus loves me.

To diffuse to hate myself the way I once did but learn to love myself the way Jesus does. And it means I shall pray with all my might to love others the way Jesus loved them.

To give myself for the unlovable, for the hypocrite, for the socially despised, for those who have hearts only Jesus could love. My mission shall be to express the love of Jesus for them, to tell them that though the world may hate them, Jesus loves them so much he has given himself upon the cross that if they should trust him they will have eternal life.

There's the heart of mission. The love of Christ flowing through his church to a needy world which desperately needs to hear that they are loved.

A costly love. Well then lastly, a never-ending love. A never-ending love. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

[21 : 33] In Galatians 2.20 we read, the Son of God loved me, aorist, and gave himself for me.

We've seen that before the foundation of the world and on the cross Jesus loved us.

But does he, as the song says, still love me? In Revelation chapter 1 verse 5 we have our answer. We read these words in that verse, to him who loves us, to him who loves us.

Yes, he loves us still. He loved us then and he loves us now. The way the verb is presented in Revelation 1 is present and active, which means not only does he love us now, he will always love us.

The hymn is quite correct. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Revelation 1 verse 5. Isn't this simply the most amazing thing?

Isn't it cheap brightness of the glory of Christ that he loves us still? As we look at our progress or lack of we've made in our Christian lives, we wonder to ourselves, how could he still love me?

[22 : 49] The more mature we become as Christians, the darker our sin appears to us and the more amazed we are that Christ still loves us. We know only too well how we have failed him in our thoughts and our words and our deeds by what the book of Common Order describes as our negligence, our weakness and our own deliberate fault.

If ever we thought we weren't loving when we first believed, now we know it to be true. How often we are filled with doubt and unbelief.

Sometimes we even allow ourselves to think, is any of this God stuff true? When we're going through good times, we ignore Christ.

When we're going through bad times, we blame Christ. Our Bibles remain unopened and our prayer lives are barren. Oh, our public face may be committed, but underneath we are empty.

In all these times, although our love for Christ is like the smoldering wick of a spent candle, the love of Christ for us continues to burn brighter and hotter than the sun.

[24 : 09] He loves us despite all our doubts and perhaps even because of them. Though I don't love Him, He loves me.

Rather like a penitent Peter being asked by Jesus, do you love me? There's a spark in us which responds, yes, Lord, you know that I love you and well we might, but the spark of our love for Him is

