

The Son of God Who Loved Me

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[0:00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter 2, and we may read again at verse 20.

! I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. And I'd like particularly to focus on the phrase, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

The letter to Galatians was written in the first instance to former recovering Pharisees, a people who found it difficult to leave their legalism behind.

Who better to write such a letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit than a recovering Pharisee himself?

[1:21] The letter has been called the Magna Carta of Christian liberty. You could say that the same verse is a declaration of independence.

Yet we know, wrote the Apostle, that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Could I suggest that it is not just former Pharisees who have a problem in leaving legalism behind? Is it not true of the Christian believer today that although saved by grace alone, we do not always know how to live by grace alone?

As one commentator expressed it, we are legalists by nature. The letter to the Galatians challenges many of our preconceptions about what it means to have a right relationship with God.

So you can say that this letter was also written for people just like us. Whether we like to admit it or not, there is engraven in our DNA the principle, do this and live, was the principle that was engraven in our first parents.

[2:57] And it follows us even into a state of grace. This letter then, speaking to us too, the Church of Christ at any one time is full of recovering Pharisees who need to receive the Gospel again as if for the very first time.

That ought not to fill us with anger and indignation or resentment, but ought to make us humbly examine our lives in the light of the challenging content of this letter.

Martin Luther, who wrote a very valuable commentary on this letter, tells that his liberating moment came when he discovered that Christianity was not about what he had to do for God, it was about what God had done for him in Jesus Christ.

In his lectures on Galatians, had the theme of the free grace of God and Christ received by faith. And through the writing of Luther, incidentally on Galatians, John Bunyan came to a great appreciation of Luther. In Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, grace abounding to the chief of sinners, he tells how he found his condition in Luther's experience.

[4:37] And I quote, I found, he said, my condition so largely and profoundly handled as if his book had been written out of my heart.

In the chapter we read, Paul boldly, fearlessly and publicly rebukes the apostle Peter for his behavior and the example he was setting.

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. Peter apparently did not wish to offend those of a Jewish persuasion, the reason being he feared the circumcision party.

And you could say there was a kind of standoff between what the law accomplishes and what grace accomplishes. May have been that Peter did not like confrontation and so went out of his way to avoid conflict.

However, looking at the life of Peter, you have to conclude that not for the first time was Peter influenced by his prevailing circumstances.

[5:56] Remember his denial in the hall of the high priest where he was adamant in stating that he was not associated with the accused prisoner Jesus Christ.

And in this context, he was challenged by Paul. The rest of the Jews thought Paul acted hypocritically along with him so that even Barnabas was led astray by the hypocrisy.

When I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, if you though a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

We're not told of Peter's reaction to the rebuke of his fellow apostle, but I would expect him to have accepted it in the manner in which it was given.

But it must have been some moment. Peter was the older apostle, and here is Paul, the younger apostle, and he's upbreeding Peter for his behavior and the way that he's leading people astray.

[7:10] For Paul, it was not peace at any price, but the gospel at all costs. such was his fervent zeal, because the message of the gospel and the estimation of the apostle was at stake.

It was a battle for the gospel of free grace. The message of good news proclaims that through the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, Jesus has done everything required by God for the salvation of sinners.

Nothing else is needed to receive forgiveness for sins, enjoy fellowship with God, or have the hope of eternal life.

Accept trust in Christ alone. That is briefly a summation, if you like, of the gospel of free grace.

And Paul was fighting to make sure that the church continued to live by the gospel it had always preached. And so you find him writing, yet we know, he says in this letter, that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

[8:31] So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law, because by works of the law, no one will be justified.

It's a key text that teaches the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.

And Paul mentions the term three times in the one verse.

The principle that justification cannot come by works. It's what distinguishes Christianity from other religions in the world.

And Paul, being a student of the scriptures, knew what was taught in the scriptures, in the Old Testament, in the book of Psalms, for example, where the psalmist states, enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

And Paul translates that in the New Testament by works of the law, no one will be justified. Out going to church, a good habit, reading the Bible, another profitable habit, giving to charitable causes, all good things.

[9:49] But none of that of itself will ever get us into heaven. That is one very good reason why the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone is of such supreme importance.

You know, there was a character in Greek mythology by the name of Atlas, who was condemned to hold up the heavens or sky for eternity.

And James Packer, in one of his writings, made the observation, the doctrine of justification is like Atlas. It bears a world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of saving grace.

when Protestants let the thought of justification drop out of their minds. The true knowledge of salvation drops out with it and cannot be restored till the truth of justification is back in its proper place.

When Atlas falls, everything that rested on his shoulders comes crashing down to James Packer.

Well, to our text this evening, first, the person who loved, second, the proof of his love, thirdly, the person loved, and finally, the power of love.

[11:23] First, the person who loved. Paul wrote, the Son of God who loved me. Now, just repeat that to yourself.

Is that not an astonishing statement to make? The Son of God who loved me. There is no other personal statement in the whole of the New Testament that can compare to it.

Yes, you will find verses that speak of Christ's love for the church, but not this personal statement of being loved by the Son of God.

So, let us select from the Bible some of the information given about the identity of this person who loved. Note, Paul didn't write, Jesus loved me.

That would be true, but that's not what he wrote. We may make the statement, Jesus loves me, and when challenged us to our basis and confidence for making such a statement, we may quote from the hymn that we learned as children, Jesus loves me.

[12:40] This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Nor did Paul write, Christ loved me. That is also true. That's not what he wrote.

He wrote, the Son of God loved me. The identity of the one who loved him, important to the apostle as it should be to every believer.

Paul is surely stressing the divine identity of the one who loved him, person who has no beginning. His generation was complete from eternity.

In the words of one of the early church fathers, the Son is the unoriginally God has repeatedly applied to him the incommunicable name of Yahweh or Jehovah, a name that is descriptive, exclusively, of the supreme being, the one only living and true God.

The Son of God repeatedly described in the Bible as the first and the last. His coming forth is from old. He is described as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty, one who searches the minds and the heart of the children of man, one who is unchanging in the sense that he is the same yesterday and today and forever, the great creator God.

[14:20] And as Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church, he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. made. And you remember how John in his prologue, how he speaks of all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.

The scope of Christ's authority extends to the bounds of his creation, for by him all things were created, heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

scientists tell us that the span of the physical universe is 93 billion light years.

[15:31] Now I have to confess that my understanding of that piece of information is virtually nil. But does it not convey a sense of the majestic power of the Son of God, much on earth that is absolutely astounding.

He created the tiniest creatures, for example. I read somewhere that there are 800,000 catalogued insects with billions in some of the species.

And on a warm, calm, damp August evening, I don't think any of us would find that piece of information difficult to grasp when we are attacked by the dreaded image.

Think of the genius of divine wisdom in the wonder of the human brain or the complex working of the human eye with its millions of points of data that instantaneously focus into a single image. every form and kind of matter, simple or complex, the atom and the star, the sun and the cloud, every grade of life from the worm to the angel, every order of intellect.

[16:55] Being and being around us and above us, the splendors of heaven, the nearer phenomena of earth are the product of the one designated the son of God.

And Paul wrote, this person to whom belongs infinite majesty and glory, the one who was ever in the presence of the father, loved him.

This love is not general. It is a love that is special. it focuses on those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Those who are precious to him are engraven on the palms of God. It is a selective love. He loved me, wrote the apostle.

It is a personal love. It is a love that knows no variation. Although there may be very different manifestations of it in the lives of believers.

[18:06] Some manifestations of love that may cause you to query his love for you.

Yet it is, I believe, a source of everlasting wonder to the saints in glory. It lies at the heart of their united harmonious choral praise.

It is a source of continuing amazement the lives of believers on earth that Christ loved them. Lives that were crippled and twisted by the pervasive debilitating power of sin.

Divine Christ this evening. You experienced the power of Christ's love in its intensity. So as a helpless sinner, you were unable to respond to the overtures of grace.

And you can also testify, the Son of God loved me. This love of Christ is eternal, it is free and unmerited.

[19 : 26] Nothing in the life of the sinner to draw out that love. And the measure of this love is how much it gives and that brings me to my second point, the proof of his love.

If the first statement blows you away, what about the second part of the statement? The Son of God gave himself for me.

me? This is, I believe, the ultimate definition of love. Jesus himself taught, greater love has no one on this that someone lay down his life for his friends.

And in order for this love to be fully demonstrated, the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us. One commentator expressed it, that the creator and upholder of the universe should come down to such a world as this and clothe himself in the inferior nature of its race.

And in that nature die to forgive and save it. It's the most amazing of revelations. What sublimity is shed around the gospel?

[20 : 48] The God of the first chapter of Genesis is the babe of the first chapter of Matthew. Think about that.

Think about the wonder of that. He was always the Son, but he became man. And Paul is reflecting on the wonder of the plan of redemption as accomplished by the one who loved.

You see, love is not something tangible. You cannot put it in the palm of your hand and say, that's love. You have to find the proof of love. You need evidence.

And Paul gives us the evidence. He places the irrefutable evidence or proof of the love of the Son of God before our minds. The Son of God gave himself for me.

And what Paul states is not merely the innocent one taking the place of the guilty. It's God the Son in our nature taking the place of the guilty, enduring in himself his own condemnation of sin.

[22 : 04] That's why he took human nature in order to put himself in a position where he had blood to shed and a soul to pour out in death. the fourth servant song in Isaiah so powerfully prophesied.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many and he shall divide the spoil with the strong because he poured out his soul to death. Numbered with the transgressors bore the sin of many makes intercession for the transgressors.

Ask yourself the question for whom did he shed his blood and poured out to soul? And the biblical answer is an innumerable number of people whose souls were enveloped by thick spiritual darkness which could never be removed unless their guilt was removed.

Fallen man is under the wrath and curse of a holy God. You know there's a vivid picture portrayed by the prophet Jeremiah of the incorrigible wickedness of the human heart.

The prophet speaks of the sinful practices of the nation of Judah. Sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron with a point of diamond. It is engraven on the tablet of their heart.

[23 : 27] The sins of the nation, they weren't just written in pencil. Something that could easily be erased or rubbed out. They were chiseled into their stone cold hearts with a metal pen.

In other words, that corruption was deep seated and ineradicable. That's how deeply ingrained sin is in all of our hearts unless we are in receipt of divine forgiveness.

The Bible reminds us that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. And the apostle sets before us the price of redemption.

In the words of our text, the Son of God gave himself for me. That involved the Son of God in our nature entering into the darkness and bearing the wrath and curse.

The only way which the guilt of sin could be removed in order for light to replace darkness was for the Son of Man in our nature to enter into the darkness in bearing the wrath and curse.

[24 : 46] He gave himself. He gave himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile sinners to God. He gave himself.

That was the supreme sacrifice. He laid down his life. And in doing so, he was laid in the dust of death. Was that not what prompted the hymn writer on an occasion to write?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed thee. Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, should die for me?

Oh, does it fill you with astonishment this evening that the Son of God gave himself for you? And that brings me to my third point.

[25 : 58] The proof of his love, the person who loved, the person loved. Paul wrote, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

He loved me, wrote Paul. He gave himself for me. Was the meal from Paul wrote a believer and a faithful follower?

Was that the focus of the love of the Son of God? No! Was that the kind of person for whom he gave himself? And again, no.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person. Though for a good person one would dare even to die, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When Christ met with Saul of Tarsus, he was behaving like a wild animal in his threats to the followers of the Church of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 07] The book of Acts tells us he was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way man or woman he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

He was engaged in active persecution of the Church of Christ. And as Christ forcefully reminded him on that never-to-be- forgotten Damascus road meeting, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul was ignorant of the identity of the questioner. Who are you, Lord? He asks. And the response, I am Jesus.

I am the Savior of sinners. I am the Son of God. And what was true of this person who speaks of being loved, who can state that the Son of God gave himself and his place?

Well, you may remember his own biographical description of his own former way of life. I was a blasphemer, persecutor, an insolent opponent, until mercy arrested me.

[28 : 22] I received mercy, says the apostle. He had been under the dominion of darkness.

Remember how he wrote in his letter to the Colossians, God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

He included himself among the number who were under the domain of darkness and were delivered. Yet such is the devastating, blinding effect of sin in his pre-converting days, that that was certainly not how he viewed himself.

He was striving to keep the law. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law of Pharisees, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Oh, often, is that not how we tend to think of ourselves? I'm not really such a bad person.

Oh, I know I'm not what I should be, but, oh, we may fervently believe that, but the reality is that we are sinners.

[29 : 41] We are under the condemnation of the holy, just, law of a righteous God. Nothing we can do can alter that fact.

That is why the statement of love is so really wonderfully amazing. Remember how Paul prayed that believers be empowered by God to grasp this love that surpasses knowledge.

and in doing so Paul wrote about the immeasurable dimensions of Christ's love. Its breadth and length and height and depth.

Reminds me of the story of a little boy who was out fishing with his dad. They were using hand lines and the little boy was letting down his hand line.

He could touch the bottom. He could feel the bottom. But they moved further out to sea. And when the little boy let out his hand line he could no longer feel the bottom.

[30 : 52] He turned to his dad and he said, surely this is the great ocean. And his dad said to him, no, when you are in the middle of the great ocean there is no bottom or no shore.

when you come face to face with the love of God and Christ it is like a huge ocean with no bottom and no shore.

And the terms used by Paul are calculated to set before our minds the immensity and inexhaustible nature of Christ's love.

irrespective of background or race or age there is room in the extensive embrace of love.

There was a place for me states Paul the arch persecutor striving to keep the law and you go through the Bible and you discover there was a place in the love of Christ for Rahab the prostitute. [32:01] There was room for backslidden penitent restored Samson. There was a place for Naomi who experienced being emptied in order to be even more filled.

A place for Rose the Moabite who became an heir of the promises. There was a place for the woman there was a sinner who came into the house of Simon.

There was a place for little Zacchaeus the greedy tax collector and we could go on. And oh my friend the wonder is there is a place for you and the likes of you and me.

Does that not humble you if you find yourself this evening in the embrace of this love? For you do not possess knowledge of anyone like you possess of your own self.

love of the love of the love of the judgments of a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked.

[33:12] But even with impaired biased knowledge of self you know if you are in Christ this evening you never deserved a place in the all embraces all enveloping love of the son of God that took you in as a neglected helpless orphan without resources for in his eyes we were unseemly and loathsome objects.

And the words that you find in the prophecy of Ezekiel we were lying in our own blood when he looked on us in love and said to us live.

Christ's love then is not some abstract concept. It is a passionate affection that has been expressed through sacrificial action.

Many waters the Bible says cannot quench love neither can floods drown it and that is certainly true of the love of God in Christ.

The person loved a hell deserving sinner. The proof of his love he gave himself the person who loved the Son of God and finally the time is going the power of love.

[34:38] We can say that the love spoken of by Paul wells up from within the divine being and it flows towards loveless lives with such power that they are constrained to no longer live selfishly for themselves but to selflessly devote their lives in reciprocal love to the one who loved them.

They are motivated controlled by the love of Christ. They are under the dominion of the expulsive power of a new affection.

That's why they follow the Lord. That's why they love coming to the table of the gospel. You relish the food and drink provided on the table that nourishes your soul, satiates your appetite, and strangely at the same time, it whets your appetite for even more of the same provision.

Because under the motivating power of the love of the Son of God, this has become true. Just as it was true of the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And is that not why? You come to his own table, to the Lord's table, as you express your deep indebtedness to him, but also your anticipation and expectation of his coming to take you to be forever with himself.

[36:33] But what, my friend, if that is not true of you tonight? What if you are a stranger to the love of God and Christ? What if you have never been constrained by this power that turns lives around and makes them live for the one who loved them and gave himself for them?

Oh, may God grant that you come to know this person in your life and that is love works mightily and powerfully in your heart.

The person who loved one from all eternity was immersed in love as the beloved son. He came from a world of love. He came from a world of love.

The love that exists between the persons of the glorious Trinity. The proof of his love he gave himself. The only sacrifice that could accomplish redemption.

The person loved me says Paul and everyone who has been united to Jesus through faith in his name. Me the unworthy undeserving sinner.

[38:00] The power of love they might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised again.

Let us pray. Oh eternal and ever blessed one. There is so much in the little text before us this evening.

and eternity will never exhaust the wonder and astonishment of the lives of the redeemed as they constantly focus and contemplate on the one who loved them and gave himself for them.

Oh that each one of us this evening might be able to make the same admission and the glory shall be thine. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. Let us conclude by singing to God's praise from Psalm 108 page 146 of the psalm book.

[39:21] Psalm 108 page 146 O Lord God my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I'll sing harp and lyre I will awaken and my song the dawn will bring Lord my God among the nations I will ever give you praise in the midst of all the peoples I will sing of you always for your steadfast love is boundless greater than the heavens high and your faithfulness towards us reaches even to the sky far above the highest heavens be exalted O my God and through all the earth around us let your glory spread abroad let us sing these verses in conclusion

O Lord God my heart is steadfast O Lord God my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I will sing Harp and lyre I will awaken and my song the dawn will bring Lord my God among the nations I will ever give you praise in the midst of all the peoples I will sing of you always!
for your steadfast love is boundless greater than the heavens high and your faithfulness towards us reaches even to the sky!

But above the highest heavens be exalted O my God and through all the earth around us let your glory spread the Lord now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with you all now and forever Amen
may may