

# Sunday Morning - English

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, with the Lord's help, let's turn to 1 Corinthians and chapter 13, verse 4 and 5 there again.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

Now, the scriptures contain events that span really thousands of years. And on occasion, the scripture progresses through the biblical narrative at quite a fast pace when you're reading through it.

You'll notice that sometimes you have hundreds of years passing from one chapter closing and another chapter beginning. So sometimes the pace of scripture can be very quick indeed.

But there are other times and the pace of scripture slows right down. And when it does that, it does that at different times, but when it does that, then you're able to see certain events and certain narratives in an awful lot of detail.

[ 1 : 24 ] I suppose many of us today are quite used to being able to fast forward our TVs. That's a common function and a common feature that many people have now.

And you can fast forward your TV at different speeds. You can make it go twice the speed or five times the speed or 30 or even more. And you can control how fast you're going through something.

And if you're going through something very fast, it's almost impossible to take in the detail of actually what's going on in the program that you're watching. And you might press it a couple of times to maybe slow things down a little.

And when you slow things down, you can maybe get a better understanding or a better picture of what's going on. But it's still perhaps a bit fast. And then you press the button another few times.

And then you slow everything right down. And perhaps even you might pause it. And when you do that, you're able then to take in the full detail of whatever it is that is on the screen.

[ 2 : 25 ] And, you know, in a sense, the cross of Christ and the narrative surrounding the cross of Christ is much like that. You see, as we pass through the redemptive history of God in the pages of Scripture, sometimes it feels like we're flying through it.

As I mentioned, sometimes hundreds of years are passing very quickly and redemptive history is going very, very fast indeed. But then when you come to the events of the cross of Christ, it changes.

All of a sudden, it's like the brakes are put on. And we come to the cross of Christ and everything just slows right down. And it doesn't just slow down. It's almost like time just stands still as we come to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is that? Because this is the climactic moment of Scripture. Here, at the cross, the Passover lamb of God is slain. The God-man here is crucified.

And the significance and the solemnity of this particular event is such that we have it in more detail than we have of any other narrative or any other event in the pages of Scripture.

[ 3 : 48 ] For example, you have it recounted for us by Matthew. You have it recounted for us by Mark and by Luke and by John. And you also have it, in a sense, recounted for us by Paul and by Peter as well.

And I suppose you could say, you could even go backwards and say, you have it described for us by David in the Psalms or Isaiah and many others besides that.

We see the events of the cross through the eyes of many, many inspired men of God. And as I mentioned, because we have all these accounts of the cross, when we actually combine them all together, all these different perspectives, when we combine it all together, we have an unbelievably detailed account of the events of the cross.

It is a multi-dimensional, a multi-faceted view of the cross. We have the perspective of so many. It is almost like a 3D version of the cross. We see it from lots and lots of different angles.

But what I want to ask today, this morning, is what is it you see when you look to the cross? What is it you see? If you had to describe, I have already explained that we have lots of detail, small details, big details about the events of the cross.

[ 5 : 16 ] If you had to describe that event of the cross using one word, what would it be? What is the one word that strikes you as you see this incredibly detailed picture of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, some people might look at the cross and say, well, I see sin. And that is true. We look at the cross and it is a bloody and a dark sin.

It is a sin very much with sin written all over it, isn't it? And indeed, for the Lord's people, we can look up at the cross and we can see the effects of sin.

Because that is why our Lord is suffering on the cross. The reason he suffers on the cross is because of and on account of sin. And as the Lord's people, we can say, we see our sin there.

So perhaps some people might look at the cross and say, I see sin. And more personally, I see my sin. But others might look at the cross and say, well, I see the wrath of God.

[ 6 : 22 ] I see the wrath of God. And again, that's very true. We see the wrath of God being poured out on his only begotten son. That's something we very much see.

There on the cross, we see the flaming sword of the justice of God. And it is plunged right into the heart of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

These things are true. You see the wrath of God there on the cross. But we don't just see sin or judgment or the wrath of God.

We see something undergirding it all. Because although the sin of the cross is a very dark sin, although it is a sin surrounded by the presence of evil, and we sang that, the strong bulls of Bashan surrounding the cross.

Although that is true, although there is a great darkness about the events of the cross and the sufferings of Jesus, yet there is a light that shines through it all. And that light that shines through it all is the light of the love of God.

[ 7 : 31 ] In the cross, we have the greatest example and the greatest demonstration of the love of God that we could ever imagine. There, in the events of the cross and in the sufferings of Jesus, you see the love of God the Father.

You see the love of God the Spirit. And you see the love of Jesus Christ himself. We see all these things.

And for a few moments today, I want us to focus on the love of Christ specifically. As we see it here, in his sufferings on the cross of Calvary.

It's a very old saying that was certainly used in the days of the Puritans. And I believe it was used even before the days of the Puritans.

But the saying says this, Upon every apex or tittle of the law, there hangs a mountain of sense and doctrine.

[ 8 : 31 ] And in every drop of Christ's blood, there is an ocean of love. And today, with the Lord's help, what we want to try and do is immerse ourselves in that very ocean.

In the ocean of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. A wonderful ocean indeed. And the text I want to use to kind of gather our thoughts around this particular theme is the one that we read there in 1 Corinthians 13.

So 1 Corinthians 13, 4 and 5. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. I want to just stick with those particular verses.

Those two verses. Verse 4 and 5. Now, this here, it's a well-known passage, isn't it? And it's a passage that's very often read at times of wedding services and things like that.

[ 9 : 40 ] But of course, this passage about love, it's not primarily about the love of a husband towards his wife and vice versa. That's not primarily what it's about.

Now, by all means, you can apply it in that way. And there's nothing wrong, I don't think, in applying it in that way. But that's primarily not what these verses are about. Here is a picture of the Christ-like love which all the Lord's people ought to show one another.

Isn't it? That's what this is. The Christ-like love that we ought to show. And this description or definition of love that we find here, it is supremely exemplified for us by the Lord himself.

By the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And nowhere do we see this love shown more than at Calvary. Isn't that where we see this love more than anywhere else?

Because Calvary is the picture of self-sacrificing love. That is the epitome of it. That is a picture of what we find here in the cross.

[ 10 : 47 ] The supreme example of the self-sacrificing love. So what I want to do, just for a few moments this morning, is I want to take these verses and I want us to take them to the cross.

And I want us to stand at the cross and view the cross and see there in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, this clearest and most wonderful picture of love that we could ever even begin to envisage.

So let's do that. Let's take these verses and go to the cross. And as we read these verses, we firstly read that love is patient or long-suffering, as it's also put.

And we look up at the cross, we look up at Jesus' suffering there on the cross, and what do we see? But the incredible patience and long-suffering, the loving patience and long-suffering of our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Because he came into this world with a purpose. He came into this world with a plan, a particular plan, to go and to redeem his people.

[ 12 : 01 ] He came to save his people. His people were lost and he has come to save them. And normally, when a Savior comes, in any context, I don't mean just Christ here, if someone comes to save you, then you would be delighted at that.

You would be over the moon if someone has come to save you from whatever kind of difficulty or situation that you were in. And you would listen to whatever they would have to say. For example, if you were in a burning house, if you were in a burning house or a burning building of some kind, and if you saw a fireman, if a fireman came, how grateful you would be, would you not?

If you were in a burning house, a fireman comes, you would be so grateful. You would be delighted, you would rejoice, and you would run towards them, because you know that they have come to save you. And you will gladly do whatever it is that they say.

They've come to deliver you, come to save you, and you run with joy and with gladness. Perhaps you're at trouble on the sea. Your life is at risk, or your life is in peril at the sea.

And again, you see the orange and blue of the RNLI lifeboat coming towards you. And again, it fills you with gladness and joy, because you know that they have come to save you.

[ 13 : 18 ] You know that they have come with your interests at heart. They've come to rescue you, and you will rejoice and gladly throw yourself in their hands, and again listen to whatever it is that they have to say.

They have come to save you. But that wasn't the case when Christ came into this world. It wasn't like that at all.

You see, the saviour of souls entered into this world only to be rejected, to be mocked, and to be beaten by the very ones that he has come to save.

And you see it really throughout the life of Christ, but you especially see it at the cross, don't you? You especially see it there. Because at the cross, what do you see? Do you see a congregation of people surrounding the cross and praising Jesus, and thanking Jesus for this great sacrifice which he is offering?

It's not what you see at all. It's a crowd of people who are ridiculing and mocking and blaspheming the Lord Jesus Christ. And the whole time he knows that he is doing this in order to save his people, some of whom more than likely would have been around the cross that day.

[ 14 : 36 ] Highly likely some of the Lord's people were there. They hadn't come to faith by this point, but highly likely that they were there. Because we know that in a few days' time, thousands of people were going to be saved.

We know that many of the priests were saved. So, very likely that at least some of the people in this crowd that day were going to be the Lord's. Where are the Lord's? If nothing else, you know the centurion was there, but probably there was many more than that.

But Jesus shows remarkable patience and long-suffering towards them, as he endures the very wrath of God for his people, who at this particular moment are rejecting him, are mocking him, and are beating him, and have deserted him.

And you see that wonderful patience and long-suffering, probably most of all in that prayer. Remember when Jesus there prays, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

He gives amazing patience to people who are treating him the way that they are treating him. And he does that, of course, because of his love. And when you look at the scene of the cross, you notice something else as well.

[ 15 : 54 ] You notice that even his disciples are nowhere to be seen here. The disciples aren't, well, many of the disciples aren't there, are they? Many of them have deserted him.

Many of them have abandoned their Lord at this time of his greatest need, you could say. But again, Jesus is patient with them.

And he shows this long-suffering nature of his love. Because although they have turned their back on him, he does not turn his back on them.

And he never does that. Never turns his back on his people. And remember in John 13, in the upper room there, remember we read that Jesus loved his disciples, and he loved them to the end.

And even though now they have turned from him, he's going to show his love towards them, and he's going to keep showing that love, that patient, long-suffering love, and he will show it to the very end, he will show it to the point of death itself, and death on the cross.

[ 17 : 04 ] And Christian friends here today, this patient and long-suffering love that we see here on the cross, that's the same love of Christ.

That's the same love that he shows to you. And how patient has the Lord been with you. Perhaps you too have spent many, many years rejecting him.

Perhaps you too have spent many, many years blaspheming him. Perhaps you too have spent many, many years willfully sinning against this man.

But his love for you has never ceased. It's never stopped for the Lord's people. It has never ceased. It was never turned away at all. His love for you is full of patience and long-suffering.

And we know that as the Lord's people. And that is the love that we see when we look to our Lord dying and suffering there on the cross.

[ 18 : 09 ] So we look up at the cross and we see there the loving, long-suffering patience of Christ as he's enduring these pains of hell. For a people who at this point are mocking, deserting and ridiculing the Lord.

And now we come back to our verses in 1 Corinthians 13. And we also read there that this is a love that does not envy or boast and it is not arrogant.

In other words, this is a love that displays itself in humility towards others. And as we lift up our eyes from the text and as we look at Jesus' suffering on the cross, what do we see?

We see the greatest example of humility and loving humility that you could possibly conceive of.

A wonderful humility. Because hanging there on the cross is no mere man. Jesus is no mere man. He's no mere prophet. He's no mere special teacher.

[ 19 : 16 ] He is God. God incarnate. The God-man. And there on the cross is the God-man. And again, that is almost, or it is too much for our minds to actually get round.

The seriousness of that. The God-man. The one through whom all things were created. The one, amazingly, the one through whom actually formed this hill of Golgotha.

He's the one through whom that hill is formed and created. And yet there he is, hanging on a cross there. Nailed to a cross. Nailed to a tree.

It is the King of Glory. He doesn't look like that. He doesn't look like the King of Glory at all. He looks like a nobody. He looks like a criminal. To the unbelieving eye, he just looks like a common, a criminal, some kind of weak, failed leader.

But there's a reason why he looks like that. There's a reason. Because in order to come down and to save his people, he had to do something. Something which he voluntarily did.

[ 20 : 24 ] He had to lay aside the garment of his own glory, which was his from eternity past. He, as it were, lays that garment aside. And he puts on himself a different garment.

He puts on himself the garment of the servant. And he humbles himself. And he enters into this world. And he enters as a man.

A man. God incarnate. A man. And not a man of privilege. Not a man of prestige, is it? Very different. A servant. That's how he comes.

He comes as a servant. A lowly servant. And if that humiliation of becoming a man wasn't bad enough, he had to humble himself even lower than that.

The incarnation itself wouldn't have saved us. He had to humble himself even lower than that. And he had to hand himself over and allow himself to be treated like a criminal.

[ 21 : 21 ] He had to allow himself to be taken to the cross and crucified and killed there. This is the King of Glory, remember? King of Glory. He could have summoned legions of angels.

He could have. At his word. He could have summoned those legions of angels and they could have come to his assistance. He could have displayed his power and his glory in a mighty and a powerful way.

And he could have just consumed the strong bulls of Bashan which were surrounding and circling the cross. He could have done that. And he could have done that very easily indeed.

But he doesn't. He doesn't. He lovingly humbles himself to fulfill this servant role that his father has given him.

And he humbled himself this way. Why? Because of his love for his people. And when we look at the cross, we see that humility. That is a love for his people.

[ 22 : 18 ] And Christian friends, here today, you look up at the cross. And as you see that loving humility, you are able to look up and say he shows that humility because of his love for me.

So when you look at the cross, you see that loving humility of the Lord. And it is for you. The Lord's people. You know, to consider the fact that on the cross there hangs the God-man.

That's enough to overwhelm our minds. That alone is enough to overwhelm our minds. But to realize that he does that because of his love for me and you as the Lord's people.

Then that is just too much entirely for our minds and our hearts to actually come to terms with that he is doing that for me. But then, we look back at our text and we see also in verse 5 that love does not insist on its own way.

Love doesn't insist on its own way. It is not self-seeking. And again, as we look to the cross, what do we see there on the cross?

[ 23 : 33 ] But an example of love that is utterly selfless. Absolutely selfless. We live in a world which is obsessed with self.

We live in a world which tells us you are the most important person. We live in a world that tells us you look after yourself. You insist on your own way. You do whatever you need to do to enjoy life.

Whatever you need to do to look after yourself. Self is always the focus and that's very much how the world directs our mind. But how different is the love that we see on the cross?

Because this love is so different. It is a love that is utterly selfless. Christ's love for his people is so vast that everything he does, and when you look at that cross, you see what he does.

Everything he does is in order to save them. It's not, in a sense, to save himself, is it? He's not doing that to save himself. He's doing that to save his people in order to save us, the Lord's people.

[ 24 : 43 ] And of course we see that clearly in the cross, but we see it as well in the events that precede the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, for example. There, Jesus begins to see the full extent of what was ahead of him.

As he takes the cup of God's wrath and he looks inside this cup of God's wrath and he realizes the darkness of what lies before him. He realizes what it's going to mean to become sin or to become the sin offering.

And as he looks into that cup and as he beholds that sheer darkness and horror of what that involves, he recoils.

Does he not? He recoils. As he looks at it, he jumps back. And such was the stress of that event of looking into that cup and being mindful of what awaited him.

Such was the stress of that that he actually sweated drops of blood. Great drops of blood. That's how difficult this situation was to behold that cup.

[ 25 : 49 ] And of course he famously prays, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. But, does Jesus leave it there?

Does he just say, take this cup away from me? No, not at all. Then he says those words, Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And he takes that cup, that cup of God's wrath, and he drinks it.

And he gives himself over as a sacrificial offering for the sins of his people. And he does it in a selfless way. We look at the cross, and we see an utterly selfless love.

Not a love that insists on its own way in that sense, but a selfless one. One that gives of himself in order to save his people. And this selfless love, it's also seen in the picture of Jesus as the good shepherd, isn't it?

Because in that picture of Jesus as the good shepherd, remember, the wolf comes. And what does the good shepherd do? Does the good shepherd run away when the wolf comes and there's danger to the sheep?

[ 26 : 54 ] Not at all. He doesn't run away and save his own life. He goes towards the danger. He goes towards the wolf. He puts himself in the place of danger in order to protect his sheep.

And that's exactly what we see here on the cross. Christ giving himself over in this willing, voluntary way, a willing sacrifice.

So as we look at the cross, we see an act of selfless love. You might remember a few months ago on the news, there was a story about a terrorist attack in France.

And during that terrorist attack, it was on a supermarket. And the terrorist, he killed a number of people, but he took others hostage. And there was one female till worker there, and he took this female till worker hostage.

And in an amazing act of self-sacrifice, one of the policemen, one of the French policemen, he actually gave himself, he swapped himself, he handed himself over to the terrorist in order to free this girl.

[ 28 : 01 ] And that's exactly what happened. This woman was freed. She lived. And of course, that policeman, he died. He was killed by the terrorist.

He handed himself over. And in France, they had a national memorial service for this man, for this act of selfless sacrifice. And the whole nation was watching.

And probably the whole world, certainly our news was covering the event. And everyone was watching this memorial service. And you saw tears running down people's faces as they considered this act of remarkable sacrifice and love, love for his nation.

But in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a selfless sacrifice here on another level entirely.

Because we have one who didn't just endure death, he endured the pains of hell. And he didn't just die for one person. He died for countless, millions perhaps, of his people throughout the world and throughout all time.

[ 29 : 13 ] Yet, how is it? How is it that we are moved by the sacrifice of a French policeman? As amazing as that is, and I'm not by any means taking away from his sacrifice.

But how is it that we are moved by that? Which really, it has nothing to do with us personally, in that sense. Yet, we can be utterly unmoved by this infinitely greater sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That day on the news, you saw lots of tears shed for this man. Well, how few, how few tears are shed for the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well, let's turn back to our passage again. And I just want to, we're not going to cover it all. I just want to cover one last thing in verse 5.

So, at the very end of verse 5 there, you see the last word is that love is not resentful. So, love is not resentful. Now, interestingly, the word resentful there, that's a word that's translated, if you're using the New King James or the King James, it'll be translated, thinks no evil.

[ 30 : 23 ] And the actual Greek word there is very often used by Paul in the accounting sense. Remember, Paul very often talks in that kind of way, in this accounting sense. And if you translate it with that kind of accounting sense to it, then we read that love keeps no account of evil.

Love keeps no record of evil. And for the Lord's people here today, we look up at the cross and we see a love that keeps no account and no record of our sin.

Is that not the case? That's what God tells us in his word. For his people. He says, I do not keep an account of your sin. I wipe your sins clean.

And we looked at that briefly last evening. God is just and his justice demands that punishment must be delivered because of the sins of his people.

He can't just wipe sin away. He needs to punish the sin. But when we look at the cross and when we see Jesus there suffering, we see that he has taken our sin. He has nailed our sin to his cross.

[ 31 : 30 ] And by doing that, he has cleansed. And he has taken away and removed our sin. So, on the cross of Christ, we look up and we see a love.

A love that does not keep a record of our sin. As we see the blood of the God-man falling to the ground of Golgotha. We see there the blood that has wiped away our every sin.

And ensure that no record is ever kept on it. And he went, of course, to amazing lengths in order to do just that. So, as we stand there at the cross and as we are reading these verses in 1 Corinthians 13 and 4 to 5.

And as we look up at the cross, we see there the supreme example of this love. If you had to say, where do we see this love? There you see it. In the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you can try and measure it. You can't. You can't measure it. No measurement of man, no measurement of an angel would do. Such is the vastness of the love that we find displayed there on the cross.

[ 32 : 42 ] And if you are the Lord's here today, you can look up at this scene. And you can say, the Lord has shown that love towards me.

Because you love me. And now, we seek to show our love to the Lord. As we gather together in communion and to partake of the Lord's supper.



And as we do that just now, we proclaim the Lord's death. That's true. But we also proclaim our love for him. We see his love.

And now we proclaim his death. And we proclaim our love towards him. Amen. May the Lord bless those few thoughts.

Now we're going to sing to God's praise. And Psalm 116. In the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 116.

[ 33 : 48 ] Page 395. And we'll sing verse 1 to 8 there. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me as he is.

Of death the cords and sorrows did. About me compass round. The pains of hell took hold on me. I grief and trouble found. Then, on the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say.

Deliver thou my soul, O Lord. I do thee humbly pray. And what does the psalmist find when he calls upon the name of the Lord in that way? He finds that God is merciful and righteous.

Yea, gracious is our Lord. God saves the meek. I was brought low. He did me help afford. So we're going to sing verse 1 down to the verse marked 8 there to praise of God.

I love the Lord because my voice and prayer teach the dear.

[ 35 : 05 ] And while I live, we'll fall on him, who bowed to me and dear.

Of death, the courts, and sorrow, sin, have I become fast round.

The pins of hell to form on me, I keep and have a hand.

Upon the name, upon the Lord, then did I fall and sing.

Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

[ 36 : 30 ] God merciful and righteousness, yea, gracious is our Lord.

God saved the meek, I was brought home, He did me help afford.

O thou my soul, do thou return unto thy quiet rest.

For ours below, the Lord to thee is bound, he hath expressed.

For my discreditable soul from death, delivered was by thee.

[ 37 : 58 ] I lift my warming eyes from tears, my feet from falling free.

We now come to the fencing of the Lord's table.

And as we come to the fencing of the Lord's table, we are simply asking, who is it that ought to come and who is it that ought to sit at the table of the Lord?

Well, we have focused our thoughts this morning on the love of Christ, and especially the love of Christ as we see it there, and the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour on the cross.

And I want to really stay on that theme, meditate on that theme, for just a few moments longer as we come to the table and during the fencing.

[ 39 : 06 ] Because when we ask the question, who should sit at the Lord's table, the answer is in some ways quite simple.

The answer is those who have experienced the power of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Puritan John Owen, he writes about this and he highlights for us this power of the love of the love of Christ.

And he identifies three aspects of this power, the power of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says the love of Christ has a transforming power.

The love of Christ has an attractive power. And the love of Christ has a constraining power. And what I want to do in these few moments in the fencing, and God willing I'll carry this on to addressing the table later on as well, I want to really look at these three points very briefly.

So firstly, the transforming power of the love of Christ. You see, this love of Christ that we have stood there and viewed in the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, the love of Christ is a love that transforms the heart of the believer.

[ 40 : 29 ] It transforms. It is transformational. You see, when you love someone, that completely changes the way in which you actually relate to that person.

So for example, you can take the example of a husband and a wife, a man and wife who love one another. Before you love your husband or before you loved your wife, you didn't really give them much thought at all.

Not any thought at all. In fact, you may well have not even known them. You may well have walked past them in the street and completely blanked them because you had no connection, you had no relation to them at all.

Your thoughts and your affections towards them were pretty much non-existent. There was nothing there. But then, in the providence of God, you begin to love them.

And all of a sudden, that transforms your relation with them. That transforms the way in which you relate to them. And now, all of a sudden, you are having many thoughts about them.

[ 41 : 43 ] Now, all of a sudden, your affections are drawn out for them. And that kind of becomes a cycle because as your affection for the one you love grows, your thoughts towards them become more numerous.

And the more you think about them, the greater that sense of affection towards them. It's this cyclic effect of thinking on them and being drawn towards them and this affection taking hold.

And how much more is that the case when we experience the love of Christ? Because His love for us is a love that ignites our affections.

It ignites our affections in a transforming way. And it gives us many thoughts about our Lord. Our thoughts towards Him greatly increase.

And we find that our lives and our affections are completely transformed by the love that Christ has for us.

[ 42 : 48 ] So this transformational evidence of the power of the love of Christ in our lives, that is in itself evidence that our place is at the table.

Is it not? If we have experienced that transforming power of the love of Christ, driving our affections, driving our thoughts towards Him.

Secondly, the love of Christ has an attractive power as well. So not just a transformational power, also an attractive power. And you see that in John 12, 32.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. So this attractive power of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as you look at the Lord Jesus Christ today on the cross, as we have endeavored to do so, it's going to result in one of two things. Either you will be drawn towards Him and His love.

[ 43 : 52 ] Either you will be attracted to this Lord who we have seen crucified for the sins of the world. Either we will be drawn towards Him and bow our knee and humbly acknowledge our unworthiness and fall before Him and putting our faith in Him.

Either we will do that or, otherwise, we will close our Bibles and we will be completely unfazed and untouched and we will walk out of here today with no attraction at all to Christ.

We've heard all about Him today, but perhaps you might walk out here utterly unfazed, no attraction towards Him at all. Well, friends, if you find yourself drawn towards this man today, if you find yourself drawn towards this incredible act of love which we see displayed for us in the cross and that atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you feel drawn and attracted towards this man, then your place is very much at the table.

Yet, maybe, some might be saying to yourselves, well, I have experienced the transforming power of the love of Christ on my life and on my affections.

I have. And you might say to yourself, I have experienced this attractive power of the love of Christ, but, there's a but, and some of you, perhaps, here today, you have this but.

[ 45 : 25 ] I have this transforming power. I sense that. I sense the attractive power of it, but, how can I come to the table when I consider my sinfulness, when I consider the rags of the sins which I come adorned with and as I come to this table?

How can I come? Like that. Even the sins that I've committed before the last time, perhaps, that you were at the table. But, Christian friend, if that's the case, and if that's your thoughts here today, you need to look again at the cross.

Because you haven't looked hard enough. Because, at the cross, you see that Christ has taken those rags of sin off you. And, he has borne them himself. On that cross, he has paid the price and punishment for the sins of your unconverted past.

But, not just that, also the sins of your converted present. He has taken the penalty for it all, of it all. So, you don't come with these rags, because the Lord has taken them away.

If you love the Lord, and you have experienced the power of the love of Christ in your life, don't let anything prevent you from taking your place at the table. Don't let the accusations of the devil, and he will do that.

[ 46 : 41 ] You sometimes wonder if the devil is more active on a communion morning than any other morning. He will come at you, accusing you, but don't let those accusations prevent you from coming. Don't let your own sin prevent you from coming.

If you love the Lord, and if you are aware of the power of his love for you, then come and feast at the Lord's table with the Lord's people.

And, this is not the table of the Free Church of Scotland. It is a table for the Lord's people. So, if you are here, and a member, and good standing in your own church, then we're going to sing Psalm 118 in a moment, and then the elements will be taken out.

At that point, you're invited to come forward, and to sit at the table. Well, now while we wait for the elements to be placed on the table, we're going to sing in that Psalm, in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118 in the Scottish Psalter, and from verse 15, In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health, the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

[ 48 : 07 ] The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high, the right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. So, we'll sing from verse 15, and the presenter will continue singing until the elements have been placed on the table, and all those who are going to be seated at the table are present at the table.

So, we'll sing to God's praise. Amen. In dwellings of the righteous, The right hand of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health, The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high, The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high, The right hand of the mighty Lord other way,

The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and shall the words of God discover.

The Lord hath we chastised sore, but not to death give no word.

O set thee open unto me the gate of righteousness.

[ 50 : 23 ] Then will I enter into them, and I the Lord will bless.

This is the gate of God's highest, the job shall end and end.

Thee will I pray for thy needers, and last my safety be.

Amen. Let's hear God's word.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

[ 52 : 03 ] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself. Then, and so, eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Amen.

Amen. We pray for God's blessing on that portion of his word. According to that institution and the command and example of our Savior, we will now give thanks.

Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would still our hearts now as we come to your table.

[ 53 : 12 ] Lord, we are reminded of that. It is not the table of Stornoway Free Church or the Free Church or even the church itself. It is the table of the Lord and it is the supper of the Lord.

Amen. Amen. And help us to be mindful of that as we gather around these elements and as we partake of them. Help us to be mindful as well that though they are just bread and wine and in and of themselves there is no power.

yet, by faith, when we partake of these things, we are nourished by you. And may we know that nourishment now as we come and as we share and as we partake.

And we especially pray for perhaps those who are here for the first time. We ask, O Lord, that you would take away any sense of anxiety or worry and that they would know a stillness themselves.

That as they partake of these things that they would feel the spiritual good of it and that it would be a nourishment to their soul or be with them especially and encourage them.

[ 54 : 21 ] And we are mindful too that there may well be those who sit at the table today and maybe will do so for the last time. We don't know these things. But yet, O Lord, that is a reminder to us as well of the urgency of these things.

We know not when we will pass from time to eternity. And may that be a reminder even to those now who sit behind the table. Lest time disappear and they enter into a lost eternity without having put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, as we come to the table, we do so proclaiming your death and proclaiming that great love which you have for us and our life for you.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, we have been thinking there about the power of the love of Christ.

And as I mentioned, John Owen, he highlights three particular aspects of that love. You have the transforming power.

[ 55 : 28 ] You have the attractive power of the love of Christ. Christ and you also have the constraining power. Now, I've said a wee bit there about the transformational power, the transforming power of the love of Christ. And I touched a little on the attractive power of the love of Christ, but I want to actually return to that second point just for a couple of minutes now and then just very briefly after the supper I'll look at the third point. So, on the point of the attractive power of the love of Christ, John Owen says this.

He says, If you have a true sense, brethren, of the love of Christ in dying for you, it will draw your souls to him.

I do not now speak to you about the first drawing of Christ, which is unto believing, but the following efficacy of the love of Christ to draw souls that already do believe nearer unto him.

You see, what John Owen is saying there is that this attractive power of the love of Christ, it isn't something that just draws us towards him in salvation. It does that, and God willing, we've experienced that at the table, that initial drawing, that initial attraction.

But this attractive power of the love of Christ, it goes further than that. This is a power that the Lord's people experience right the way throughout our Christian life.

[ 57 : 00 ] It is a power that draws us towards him. This attractive power of the love of Christ continually drawing us towards him. And my prayer is that you'll see that in this supper today, that drawing power like a magnet.

That's what it is, you know, a magnet, when you get closer to a magnet, it exerts more force than the closer you get. And that's what the love of Christ is like.

It is like a magnet. And as it draws us in, and the nearer we get to it, the more attractive it becomes, and the more we are drawn towards him. And as we partake of the supper here today, we are reminded in a very visible way of the extent of the love of Christ for us.

We see that in these elements, the broken bread and the wine. We see there visible reminders of what Christ has done for us in dying.

And that is a reminder to us of his love for his people. And as we partake of these elements here today at the table, I hope that we see that.

[ 58 : 05 ] That we see that love of Christ and that that love of Christ actually draws a practice even closer to him. so that when we leave this place, we will be leaving, having been drawn even closer to our Lord and Savior.

So, in the Lord's Supper, we are attracted to, or drawn closer to Christ. But, there is a little bit more to it than that as well. There is also a sense in which we are attracted to, or drawn closer to, one another.

You see, the love of Christ, it isn't just something that draws us to himself. In an amazing way, it actually draws us to one another. Why is it that we are here at the table today?

What is it that we have in common? Are we just a random group of people that I have met here? Do we come here and merely share some bread? Do we come here and merely share the wine?

Well, no. We don't just share these things. We share something much more powerful than that. We share in the love of the Lord Jesus. those.