

# The Love That Passes Knowledge.

by Horatius Bonar

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*The love of Christ is an unquenchable and unpurchasable love that fills the soul, liberates us from bondage, and gladdens us in the most sorrowful hour.*

**Scripture:** Song of Solomon 8:7, Jeremiah 31:3, Hosea 11:4, Romans 8:35, Ephesians 5:25

**Topics:** "Unconditional Love", "The Love of Christ"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the unquenchable and unpurchasable nature of Christ's love, illustrating that no amount of suffering, shame, or unworthiness can extinguish it. He draws parallels between the love of Christ and the love of a mother, highlighting its everlasting and immeasurable qualities. Bonar asserts that this divine love cannot be bought or earned, as it is freely given and transcends all human understanding. He encourages believers to recognize the depth of Christ's love, which remains steadfast despite our inconsistencies and failures. Ultimately, Bonar reminds us that this love is the source of true joy and liberation in our lives.

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## Transcript

"Many waters cannot quench love; neither can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised." - Song of Solomon 8:7

Let us take this verse as descriptive of the love of Christ, the "love that passes knowledge." It is he who speaks in the fifth verse, "I raised you up under the apple tree"; and his words here remind us of similar ones elsewhere: "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn you"; "I drew them with cords of love, and with the bands of a man"; "he found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness"; "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." We might say that the passage carries us back to Eve, "the mother of all living," - Eve under the fatal tree. The redeemer comes and raises up her offspring under that tree, for she is the mother of the living; and there this mother of the living brought her children forth in sorrow, according to the original sentence on woman, "In sorrow shall you bring forth children."

Jesus thus declares his love to his church, and she replies, "Set me as a seal," not only on your heart, but on your arm also, your inner, and your outer part- your place of love; your place of strength; your place of energy and action. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? His love is invincible and irresistible as death; it is a jealous love, unyielding and inexorable as the grave. Its true figure is that of fire- coals of fire- the very flame of Jehovah. Here, then, is the love of Christ! Its breadth, length, height, and depth, are

absolutely immeasurable!

But our text singles out two things especially concerning this love-

I. It is UNQUENCHABLE. It is not all love that is unquenchable; but the love of Christ is. It is love forevermore. Beyond a father's, or a mother's, or a brother's, or a sister's, or a lover's love, is this great love of Christ; the one and only love that passes knowledge; the one love that nothing in heaven, or earth, or hell is able to extinguish or cool; the one love whose dimensions are beyond all measure.

It is here spoken of as a thing of FIRE; and of it as such it is affirmed that "waters," "many waters" (Psalm 69:1,2) cannot quench it; as a thing of LIFE which the floods cannot drown (Psalm 69:15, 93:3).

(1.) The waters of SHAME AND SUFFERING sought to quench and drown it. They would have hindered its outflowing, and come (like Peter) between the Savior and the cross; but this love refused to be arrested on its way to Calvary; it would not be either quenched or drowned. Herein was love! It overleaped all the barriers in its way; it refused to be extinguished or drowned. Its fire would not be quenched, its life would not be drowned.

(2.) The waters of DEATH sought to quench it. Their waves and billows went over him. The grave sought to cool or quench it; but it proved itself stronger than death. Neither death nor the grave could alter or weaken it. It came out of both as strong as before. Love defied death, and overcame it.

(3.) The waters of OUR UNWORTHINESS could not quench nor drown love. In general we find love drawing to the loveable; and when anything unseemly occurs, withdrawing from its object. Not so here. All our unfitness and unloveableness could not quench nor drown his love. It clung to the unlovely, and refused to be torn away.

(4.) The waters of OUR LONG REJECTION sought to quench it. After the gospel had showed us that personal unworthiness could not arrest the love of Christ, we continued to reject him and his love. Yet his love surmounted this unbelief, and survived this rejection. In spite of all it remained unquenched.

(5.) The waters of OUR DAILY INCONSISTENCY sought to quench it. Even after we have believed, we are constantly coming short. Ah what inconsistencies, coldness, backslidings, lukewarmness, doubtings, worldliness, and such like, are daily flowing over this love to quench its fire and drown its life! Yet it survives all; it remains unquenched and unquenchable.

All these infinite evils in us are like "waters," "many waters"; like "floods"; torrents of sin, waves and billows of evil- all constantly laboring to quench and drown the love of Christ! And truly they would have annihilated any other love; any love less than divine. But the love of Christ is unchangeable and everlasting.

II. It is UNPURCHASABLE. "If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised." The full meaning of this will come out under the following heads. All that a man has, can do nothing in such a case. Love is not merchandise; it is no marketable commodity. It has nothing to do with gold and silver.

A man's whole substance is unavailing and useless,

(1.) As a GIFT to persuade him to love. Love does not come by gifts, least of all does divine love come by human gifts. Christ's favor cannot be purchased by money. He loves without gifts, and before all gifts. Let us do justice to his free love!

(2.) As PAYMENT for having been loved. Neither before nor after has gold anything to do with love. Pay a man for loving? How revolting the thought! Pay Christ for loving? What a wickedness and what an impossibility in the thought! Love is altogether free.

(3.) As a bribe to tempt him NOT to love. Should the whole universe be offered to Christ on condition of his ceasing to love us, it would be utterly despised. Who or what shall separate us from the love of Christ? All earth and heaven together would be ineffectual to cool or quench this mighty love. He cannot but love, whatever may be the gifts offered to stay his love.

(4.) As a SUBSTITUTE for love. As if a man should say to another- a father to a son, or a brother to a sister- I cannot love you, but here is money to make up for my lack of love! Would not such a proposal be utterly despised? Were Christ to say to us, I cannot love you, but I give you heaven, would that suffice? Would not the answer be, 'What are all these gifts without love?'

Though we give our body to be burned, what would this be without love? Or what can Christ say to us for bringing him gifts, offerings, prayers, tears, money- everything but love! Without love, what are the riches of the universe? It is love he asks; it is love we need. Love we must have. What shall be given in exchange for love?

The love of Christ truly passes knowledge. It is infinite like himself. It emerges out of every storm or flood. It survives all unworthiness, and unbelief, and rejection. It is this that fills the soul; that liberates us from bondage; that gladdens us in the most sorrowful hour. Love is the true sunshine of life; and with this love Christ is to fill, not heaven only, but also earth, when he comes again in his glory!

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