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SESSION 3 | Why Our Hearts Struggle to Believe Christ's Heart For Us

I. INTRO

- *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28–30)
- "The Christian life, from one angle, is the long journey of letting our natural assumption about who God is, over many decades, fall away, being slowly replaced with God's own insistence on who he is. This is hard work." P. 151
- "The battle of the Christian life is to bring your own heart into alignment with Christ's, that is, getting up each morning and replacing your natural orphan mind-set with a mind-set of full and free adoption into the family of God through the work of Christ your older brother, who loved you and gave himself for you out of the overflowing fullness of his gracious heart." (181)

II. OUR EXPERIENCES

A. We believe Jesus loves us like we love others.

- "The Greek and Roman world of New Testament times had never dreamed of such love; its gods were often credited with lusting after women, but never with loving sinners; and the New Testament writers had to introduce what was virtually a new Greek word, *agape*, to express the love of God as they knew it." (*Knowing God*, p. 124)
- "We love until we are betrayed. Jesus continued to the cross despite betrayal. We love until we are forsaken. Jesus loved through forsakenness. We love up to a limit. Jesus loves to the end." p. 198

B. We believe Jesus loves us like others have loved us.

- *"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."* (1 John 3:16)

- *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8–9)*

- C. We interpret God’s love through our circumstances rather than through his Word.
 - *“Our tendency is to feel intuitively that the more difficult life gets, the more alone we are...The Bible corrects us. Our pain never outstrips what he himself shares in. We are never alone. That sorrow that feels so isolating, so unique, was endured by him in the past and is now shouldered by him in the present.” (48)*

 - *“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3–5)*

 - *“Suffering is the crucible in which Christ shows himself. Suffering is the crucible where faith awakens. Suffering is the crucible where love becomes wise. We learn faith and love when life goes wrong.” (David Powlison, “I’ll Never Get Over It,” Journal of Biblical Counseling, 28:1, 2014)*

III. THEOLOGICAL REASONS

- A. We don’t want to minimize God’s holiness and justice.
 - “Theologians speak of God’s simplicity, by which we mean that God is not the sum total of a *number* of attributes, like pieces of a pie making a whole pie; rather, God is every attribute perfectly. God does not have parts. (140)

 - “[Christ’s] holiness finds evil revolting, more revolting than any of us ever could feel. But it is that very holiness that also draws his heart out to help and relieve and protect and comfort. Again we must bear in mind the all-crucial distinction between those not in Christ and those in Christ. For those who do not belong to him, sins evoke holy wrath. How could a morally serious God respond otherwise? But to those who do belong to him, sins evoke holy longing, holy love, holy tenderness.” (70)

B. We think the fear of the Lord and basking in his love are diametrically opposed.

1. The Lord is to be feared because he is great:

“For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.” (Psalm 47:2)

“Put them in fear, O LORD! Let the nations know that they are but men!” (Psalm 9:20)

2. The fear of the Lord has specific effects:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

“The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.” (Proverbs 8:13)

3. But the fear of the Lord is also the means to blessing and a knowledge of God’s love:

“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.” (Psalm 25:14)

“As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.” (Psalm 103:13) -

“But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children,” (Psalm 103:17)

4. The fear of the Lord is knowing God as he truly is and responding appropriately.

5. To fear the Lord is to be eternally comforted by who he is.

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:31)

C. We don't ask for or think we need the Spirit's help.

"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:6–7)

"and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5)

"But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him'— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9–10)

IV. HEART REASONS

A. We believe we have to earn Christ's love for us.

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- "Do you not find within yourself an unceasing low-grade impulse to strengthen his saving work through your own contribution?" (82)
- "If we were to more closely examine how we actually relate to the Father moment by moment - which reveals our actual theology, whatever we say we believe on paper - many of us tend to believe it is a love infected with disappointment." (189)

B. Our emotions misfire due to sinful desires.

- "The fall in Genesis 3 not only sent us into condemnation and exile. The fall also entrenched in our minds dark thoughts of God, thoughts that are only dug out over multiple exposures to the gospel over many years." p. 151
- "Fallen emotions not only sinfully overreact; they also sinfully underreact." (107)
- "It means on that day when we stand before him, quietly, unhurriedly, we will weep with relief, shocked at how impoverished a view of his mercy-rich heart we had." (180)

C. We think Jesus will get tired of loving us.

- “We are factories of fresh resistances to Christ’s love. Even when we run out of tangible reasons to be cast out, such as **specific sins or failures**, we tend to retain a vague sense that, given enough time, Jesus will finally grow tired of us and hold us at arm’s length.” (63)
- “He does not get flustered and frustrated when we come to him for fresh forgiveness, for renewed pardon, with distress and need and emptiness. That’s the whole point. It’s what he came to heal. He went down into the horror of death and plunged out through the other side in order to provide a limitless supply of mercy and grace to his people.” (37)

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30)