

The World's Great Lover

A word often used amongst Christians is commitment, being committed to Christ. It is a good word as far as it goes. It has undertones that suggest loyalty, faithfulness and dedication. Any organisation would want something similar. It also has connotations of 'my commitment', and imperceptibly the relationship has slid from being centred on Christ to being centred on me.

Another word, not used so often, which perhaps describes in a better way our relationship with Jesus, is surrender. This has been loved by Christians but is not heard so often these days. Apart from the fact that it was probably overused, it is, maybe, not the best word to use. It has suggestions of capitulation to a stronger force. An army surrenders and so does a criminal, if cornered.

A better word is yield. It is the language of love not force. When the Lord finds us in the desert place it is his love that draws us. It has been said that the world's greatest lovers are the saints who love God. But yielding to the world's great Lover has immense implications in our lives. Our heart's desire becomes Jesus only. He will lead us out of our comfort zone. Recently a copy of John Pollock's biography of St Paul has come our way. It vividly portrays the life of a man who persecuted the church but met Jesus on the road to Damascus. His life was changed forever. You may remember the words of love from the Lord, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."¹ Paul must have wept many times that he was forgiven and Jesus loved him.



Sometimes we have disassociated the forgiveness of sins from the love of Jesus. In our community we are very wary of the use of 'must' and 'ought'. It is true we must seek forgiveness and we ought to do it. But where does Jesus figure in all this? Love for Jesus begins when we are broken by his love for us. The word 'brokenness' seems to have dropped from our Christian vocabulary but a good question to ask ourselves is, have we been broken by the love of the Lord for us? St Paul was a broken man. It is possible to see those who have been broken by love. They are gentle and humble like their Lord.

There is something reassuring about yielding to the love of God in Christ. We are held in his love, always and forever. Moreover, Jesus taught us that we have a heavenly Father and we are his children. He also taught us about prayer; that we can go to our Father with our requests and he will answer. This is a wonderful promise. If we live by it then we know the peace of God in every circumstance. What a weight is taken from us when we realise that it is not our responsibility to run our lives! Sometimes we don't pray unless we are in a dire emergency, or we pray, and when the answer comes, we fail to see it for what it is, a gift from our heavenly Father, and therefore do not thank him.

All this does not mean that we will never experience suffering. Out of love for his Lord and his fallen world, Paul set off on his missionary journeys. He was persecuted almost everywhere he went, was scourged, flung into prison and chased out of town after town,

often by angry mobs. In the end he gave his life for the Lord who loved him and whom he loved. Not many of us, in this country, are called to such a heroic life, but one way or the other, it is likely that we will experience pain, loss or sorrow at some stage of our lives. It was a Roman Catholic nun who said to us, "Always say yes to the will of God even when you say it in tears". Only those who know that they are held in the arms of everlasting love can give God that 'Yes'.

But life is not all suffering! Paul experienced joy, as he saw others come to faith. Perhaps the wonder of creation, as he tramped those Roman roads, brought healing to his body and soul? He knew the risen Christ was with him. What greater joy than that! It is good to remind ourselves constantly that we are loved by God.

¹ Acts 26:14 NIV