

Daily Life with Christ. Love-34: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of proper love: Metaphysics of supernatural knowledge (faith) and love.

**The metaphysics of going from God's actualization  
of human natural love and knowledge  
to living in and sharing of  
God's very own divine supernatural love and  
knowledge**



(Pdf copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/041318.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

**George:** You mentioned that proper love is when God is viewed as the proper end/*telos* of man and that improper love is when man makes himself the *telos* of life. You make the point that when man sees God and His plan as the highest good he has proper love, but when he makes himself and other things the greatest goods, then he has improper love.

**Stephen:** Yes, when makes himself, work, family, recreation, social status, or anything other than God his greatest good, then he has improper love. And the improper love will actually keep him from loving other persons and things with as much value as he otherwise could. All one has to do to become an idolater is to make gods out of anything in creation. One does not have to set up little idols around the fireplace to be an idolater. What we want more than anything, what we value more than anything is our god. What we think about and long for more than anything is our idol. What we crave is our god. It could be sex, money, family, work, or the social scene. It is the worship of these things that destroy love for God.

**George:** Can you point to a passage that teaches that if one craves for material things, he is engaged in idolatry or that that destroys love for God?

**Stephen:** Col 3:5, "*covetousness, which is idolatry.*" Matthew 6:24, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.*" 1 John 2:15, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*"<sup>16</sup> For all

*that is in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world."*

**George:** How does loving the things of this world destroy love of God?

**Stephen:** Loving licit things of the world does not destroy the love of God. It is loving and living for them instead of God that destroys love for God. It is a matter of priority.

**George:** Can't I love both?

**Stephen:** You can't be devoted to both! For example, if you live foremost for the temporal things, then God will necessarily become a threat simply because His plan is that one day you will lose them all, whether quickly through premature death or in old age. As we get older we lose our youth, looks, friends, our children as they start new families, and finally health (unless we are raptured). There are no u-hauls behind hearses. Jesus was quite clear that our focus should be on the next life, not the temporal things of this life, which is one reason why so many left Jesus. The basic and ultimate mandate is to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and might. We are to love God and life with Him as our greatest good. Anything less than that is improper love, which leads to becoming a victim, a slave of the cosmos, the world. This leads to loss of eternal perspective and with it the power to live the spiritual life above the circumstances (see Hebrews 11:16).

**George:** How does one love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind—especially when there are so many distractions in life?

**Stephen:** We cannot do it in our own power. The only way is to participate in God's own perfect and infinite love. The same is true of faith, which is the sharing in God's wisdom.

**George:** What do you mean by participating in the love of God?

**Stephen:** There are two powers of our souls that are involved: the intellect and the will. By participation in God (2 Pet 1:4), our intellects are raised to the supernatural level in that we can see and believe in the realities of the Word of God. By living in God, our wills are also raised and partake of love. In sum, our natural intellects and wills are raised to a supernatural level so we can partake of God's knowledge as revealed in the Word of God and partake of His love in our wills. It is all about life in God. As a matter of fact, the supernatural power is God Himself, not something that can be separated from Him. In sum, God gives Himself for there is no divine power apart from God.

**George:** How does God give us supernatural knowledge? Are you saying that when a person is saved that he gains supernatural knowledge . . .that his IQ goes up?

**Stephen:** No! His IQ does not go up at salvation or when the believer is living in communion with God. The supernatural knowledge takes place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> act of the mind.

**George:** What do you mean 2<sup>nd</sup> act of the mind?

**Stephen:** In classical logic, there are three acts of the mind. The 1<sup>st</sup> act is the concept. The 2<sup>nd</sup> act is one of judgment. The third act is one of reasoning. For example, in the 1<sup>st</sup> act I can conceive of

a dog, cat, unicorn, and Pegasus. In the first act, I make no judgments about them. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> act of the mind, I make judgments. I make the judgment that a dog and cat are real beings with real essences and properties, and that a unicorn and a Pegasus have no existence, they are not real. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> act of the mind, I engage in reasoning based on the two previous acts of the mind.

**George:** But how does God give us supernatural knowledge in the second act of the mind. . . without giving us a supernatural IQ? Can you give me an example?

**Stephen:** Sure! Say two unbelievers read John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Say they both have the same IQ. Say that one believes in Jesus Christ and gains eternal life and the other does not believe and therefore remains condemned before God. By faith one participates in the eternal life of God, and therefore enters into the supernatural realities of the passage regarding God's love and wisdom as exemplified in Jesus Christ, and salvation. It is God who is the efficient cause of me accepting by faith the revealed knowledge in the passage. There is no change in their respective IQs. The only difference is that the believer knows that the truths of John 3:16 are true. God actualized his 2<sup>nd</sup> act of knowledge in enabling him to see that it is true. The other person would put it in the category of the unicorn and Pegasus—things that are not true. Faith is nothing more than knowing that God's revealed truth is true with absolute and undefeatable certainty. This is all about the intellect. Of course, the way man is designed, it is the will, not the intellect that is the most dominant power. No intellect will assent apart from the will's willingness. No matter the evidence, if the will does not want to accept any truth, it has the power to turn the intellect away from any truth to consider something else. In salvation and the spiritual life, God must first work on the will, before the intellect will assent.

**George:** So you are saying that the will is more important than the intellect?

**Stephen:** Not completely. They both have their priorities. The will cannot love something without the intellect's knowledge. But the will has amazing power to block the intellect and get it to consider other aspects of a being. We can see this in politics. You see very intelligent people on both the Left and the Right, the difference is not in IQs. It is in the wills. Everything that exists has both good and bad. If the will likes something, it will get the intellect to downplay the bad and focus on the good. If the will does not like something, it will emphasize the bad and downplay the good. We see this everyday in politics, in the spiritual life, and even our view of the Word of God. Never underestimate the power of the will—it can get the intellect to rationalize anything it *desires*.

**George:** When you speak of participating in God, sounds like the conduit system that you criticized earlier. Isn't this like being plugged into God?

**Stephen:** If you recall, my criticism as per my analogy of plugging the toaster in and out was about thinking of 1 John 1:9 as power source or means to fellowship. As I noted, the Word of God does not say that if I confess I will be plugged in or in fellowship with God. As far as abiding in God, the Word of God does say that if I abide in love, I abide in God and God in me, 1 John 4:16. And the Word of God does say if I walk in the light, I have fellowship with God—1 John 1:7.

**George:** So, can you give me an illustration of God raising our natural love to a supernatural level? Since the toaster analogy, as you say, is inappropriate.

**Stephen:** Well, God is already in all things. He is omnipresent. He is the existential cause for anything to exist. So, everything is already participating in God as every being owes its very present existence to Him continuously. He is already in every person; He is the nearest Being to every being as the existential cause. In grace, a person enjoys a grace-presence of God whereby the person comes to know God (supernatural faith knowledge) and love God—as the intellect and the will are graced in cooperation with a person’s free will.

**George:** It is hard for me to picture that.

**Stephen:** Of course, God is omnipresent, spaceless, and timeless. He is the Wholly Other. Let me just say that the effect of a graced presence is to elevate the natural image of God reflected in our spiritual powers of intellect and will. Like wood that begins to glow with the light of fire that envelops it, the human intellect and will, immersed in the trinitarian life of God, begin to participate more fully in the supernatural spiritual acts of knowing and loving God.

**George:** What is the difference between God existing in everyone by virtue of His existential causality and omnipresence and existing in a believer in a graced presence to produce supernatural faith-knowledge and love?

**Stephen:** Well, every being by its very existence shares in existence and goodness that is found in God as its source, yet the perfections or natures remain the creature’s own, proper to its own level of existence, even though derived from God. For example, the very existence of a duck and its nature to fly, to swim, and quack all comes from God. So too, God actualizes the very existence and nature of man to know (intellect) and love (will). However, in graced-presence man enters into God’s being as it is proper to God—the uncreated divine life of the Father, Son, and Spirit—and into God’s knowledge (as revealed in Scripture) and God’s love.

**George:** So, you are saying man can have two different kinds of love and knowledge, natural and supernatural, and they are both from God?

**Stephen:** Yes! Everything that exists is given existence by God. He actualizes all natural powers in the believer and unbeliever. And in both believer and unbeliever there is a natural love that is actualized by God. However, when the believer enjoys the graced presence of God, true fellowship, he actually partakes of something that is not inherently human: namely, God’s very own supernatural divine love and knowledge that is only natural to God Himself.