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“MORE LOVE TO THEE”
(Elizabeth Prentiss, 1818–1878)

And this is my prayer: That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9–11)

To love Christ more is the deepest need, the constant cry of my soul ... out in the woods, and on my bed, and out driving, when I am happy and busy, and when I am sad and idle, the whisper keeps going up for more love, more love, more love!

These were the words of Elizabeth Prentiss, wife of a Presbyterian minister and author of this hymn text. She was often described by her many friends as “a very bright-eyed little woman with a keen sense of humor, who cared more to shine in her own happy household than in a wide circle of society.” Although Elizabeth was strong in spirit, she was frail in body. Throughout her life she was almost an invalid, scarcely knowing a moment free of pain.

“More Love to Thee” was written by Mrs. Prentiss during a time of great personal sorrow, following the loss of two children in a short period of time. For weeks Elizabeth was inconsolable. In her diary she wrote, “empty hands, a worn-out, exhausted body, and unutterable longings to flee from a world that has so many sharp experiences.”

During this period of grief, Mrs. Prentiss began meditating upon the story of Jacob in the Old Testament. She noted how God met him in a very special way during his moments of sorrow and need. Elizabeth prayed earnestly that she too might have a similar experience. While she was meditating and praying one evening, these four stanzas were born—words that have since become a universal prayer for devout believers everywhere:

- More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee! Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee; this is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee ... More Love to Thee, More Love to Thee
- Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest; now Thee alone I seek—give what is best; this all my prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee ... More Love to Thee, More Love to Thee
- Let sorrow do its work, send grief and pain; sweet are Thy messengers, sweet their refrain, when they can sing with me, more love, O Christ, to Thee ... More Love to Thee, More Love to Thee.
- Then shall my latest breath whisper Thy praise; this be the parting cry my heart shall raise; this still its prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee ... More Love to Thee, More Love to Thee. AMEN.

— Amazing Grace
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“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18 – 20

