

† The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Communing Savior The Believer's Relationship to Christ (Part 3) John 15:9-11

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Some of you may or may not know that I have really no relationship with the man whom I know as my early father. At about the age of seven, my mom and dad were married and my dad adopted me, making me a Godfrey. For the next ten years, from an earthly perspective, my dad did many things well, providing for the family, teaching me things and the like. As an avid hunter and camper, I learned how to handle guns and survive out in the desert. But when I turned seventeen, all of this changed. To begin with, I had recently come into a living and dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. My heart and mind were given over to God and His word, something that did not sit well with my secularly minded, agnostic father. But in addition to this, my dad gave up on my mom and me. There are obvious details about that which are not important, but suffice it to say, in order to please himself, my earthly father gave up on the relationship he had with my mom and with me.

As I continued along in my early days with Christ, I began to see more and more of the worldliness and the sin that was part of my life, much of which was instilled in part by my dad. Don't get me wrong, I realize that I contributed every bit as much to my sinfulness, but it simply became more and more apparent to me that my dad was not a spiritual man and that much of what he pursued was nothing more than vanity, a mere chasing after the wind. This ultimately is the legacy my dad gave me.

Now I share all this because we can make a subtle error in our thinking, or a subtle error in our sharing of who God is. For the young woman whose father physically or sexually abused her as a child; for the one who was constantly put down by his or her father as being good for nothing; or even for one like myself, who had a dad who possessed some ethical and moral virtues, but ultimately betrayed them by his actions – for such as these could it be rightly said that they could not really appreciate God as Father because they had poor relationships with their earthly fathers? It is so commonplace these days to allow the lack of experiencing the love of an earthly father to determine one's view of God. Please don't misunderstand me here. I understand that it makes life in many ways much easier and much richer to grow up in a home where the love of the father is experienced. It is truly a sad commentary on our culture and world that so many young people grow up without the nurturing of strong and proven fatherly love. But is this to forever taint and contaminate such a one's view of God?

The only way in which such an experience of the lack of fatherly love could forever diminish one's view of God is if we had no other picture or source of what such a love should look like. And just like everything else, if we are to have a correct and high view of God, we must begin with God and not some human example. If we are to experience the fullness of the love of God the Father as expressed to us through God the Son and as experienced by the working of God the Spirit, we **must** come to God and His word and diligently immerse ourselves into what He says the love of the Father looks like. For when we do this, then and only then will we come

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to realize that whether our earthly examples of the love of a father was good or bad, either experience will only serve to fail in comparison to the love of God.

We need to be a people who allow the word of God to shape and fashion all that we believe about God, for this alone brings to the heart and mind truth, peace, satisfaction and joy. And while all of God's word is inspired and profitable, we do find in our text this morning what our Lord Jesus Christ had to say about the love of the Father, His own love for us and how that all pictures abiding in Jesus; of permanently continuing or living in the realm and ways of Christ. And in our text this morning, I submit to you that *nothing can more effectually comfort and challenge the believer's assurance of being in right relationship to God and of increasing his view of God than understanding what it means to abide in the love of Christ – for the love of Christ reveals to us the love of our heavenly Father.* Therefore, to experience abiding in the love of Christ, and to know the love of the Father, we need to consider four truths...

I. The extent of Christ's love (John 15:9a)

Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you...

Our text begins with some rather remarkable words if we would just pause and consider them. We read, “**Just as the Father has loved Me...**” When was the last time you stopped to consider just how it is that God the Father has loved God the Son? I mean, if you ever wanted to get the fullest picture of what love really looks like, can you imagine anything greater than the love of the Father for the Son? Just what does the love of the Father for the Son look like? Would you indulge me to give you what amounts to nothing more than a mere glimpse of such glorious love as revealed in the Word of God? Let me briefly expose you to the full bounty of the love of the Father for the Son as expressed in at least these six ways. These expressions of love become most important for us because of the comparison Jesus makes later in this verse.

1. It is a permanent love (John 17:24)

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

From this we must conclude that there has never been a time when the Father has not loved and sought the highest good for the Son. From before the foundation of the world and on into eternity future, God the Father has loved God the Son. It is a permanent, eternal, unending, everlasting, unfading, undiminished love. It is not temporary, changed by time or circumstance.

2. It is a professed love (Matthew 3:16-17; 17:1-5)

From two specific accounts in the gospel record, we find that God the Father makes public, professed confessions of His love for the Son. We are familiar with these, but consider them as expressions of the Father's love for the Son. ^[slide 05]

Matthew 3

16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

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Matthew 17:1-5

1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

3. It is a plenteous love (John 3:35)

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

Here we see that God the Father so loves and so trusts the Son that all things were given into His hands. The fullness of God. The possessions of God. God has withheld nothing from the Son and as we shall see then, by what manner of reason would we ever withhold anything from the Son?

4. It is a personal love (John 5:20)

For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

The love of the Father for Son reveals itself as a personal or intimate love whereby the Father shows or reveals all things to the Son. The Son sees what the Father is doing; He knows what the Father is thinking; and furthermore the Son delights in this intimate, personal love. There are some people you might like to know, but you might not like to know everything. Not so with the Father and the Son.

5. It is a protecting love (Psalm 16:7-10)

7 I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. 8 I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. 10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Considering this prophecy of the Messiah, this Old Testament prediction of the coming and working of Jesus Christ, we find that even the crucifixion itself, as horrific and scandalous as it was, was never an occasion where the love of the Father for the Son was diminished. In fact, this prophecy tells us that the Son had a confidence that even in the dark shadow of the suffering on the cross, the love of the Father for the Son would protect Him and raise Him from the dead. Truly we see a love that would not let Jesus go.

6. It is a pre-eminent love (Colossians 1:18; Philippians 2:9-10)

Finally then, I would submit to you that the love of the Father for the Son is pre-eminent love, meaning that it sought to place all honor and all glory upon Jesus. This is the very testimony of the word of God. In Colossians 1:18-19 we read:

[Jesus] is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him

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And then, let me remind you of Philippians 2:9-11 in this same context of the love of God expressed for the Son by giving Him pre-eminence.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Father loves the Son. There can be no doubt. The only limitation to the love of the Father for the Son is our ability to fully grasp its unlimited nature. Now then, come back to our text and read this statement again, “**Just as the Father has loved Me [in all these ways we have looked at and more – this permanent, professed, plenteous, personal protecting, pre-eminent love], I have also loved you...**” Just as the Father loves the Son – in this likeness – with this same passion and intensity – without diminishment – Jesus also loves His own – marvel at that thought! Could it be true? If it be true then we ought to be able to take that list of expressions of the Father’s love for the Son and see them be true of the Son’s love for His own. Why is this important? Why must we consider such things? Beloved, the same love that the Father has always had for the Son, is the very same love every disciple of Jesus Christ is to experience. This is to be yours. I want to experience the fullness of this love, of Jesus seeking my highest good regardless of the cost. Let us consider the comparisons of the love first and then we will consider some applications later.

1. It is a permanent love (John 13:1)

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end [or eternally].

The love of Jesus for His own is permanent. There is nothing that is able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39). William Gadsby, the hymn-writer, penned these words as based upon John 13:1, words that so aptly remind us of the eternal love of Christ for His own:

*The love of Christ is rich and free;
Fixed on His own eternally;
Nor earth, nor hell, can it remove;
Long as He lives, His own He'll love.*

*His loving heart engaged to be
Their everlasting Surety;
'Twas love that took their cause in hand,
And love maintains it to the end.*

*Love cannot from its post withdraw;
Nor death, nor hell, nor sin, nor law,
Can turn the Surety's heart away;
He'll love His own to endless day.*

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2. It is a professed love (John 15:13)

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Here we have one of many great professions of his love for His own, a love that sought their highest good by giving of His own life for them.

3. It is a plenteous love (Ephesians 3:14-21; Romans 8:31-32)

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

As based upon this text, we find that the love of Jesus for His own “surpasses knowledge” and it fills “up to all the fullness of God” and it does “far more abundantly beyond all we ask or think”. Truly it is a plenteous love that greatly supplies us with everything for life and godliness. That this love of Christ is an expression of the love of God is seen in Romans 8:31-32:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Even as the Father has given all things to the Son, so here we see that in Christ we also have been freely given all things. What a glorious love!

4. It is a personal love (John 15:4; Galatians 2:20)

We have already read the command of Jesus in John 15:4, “**Abide in Me, and I in you...**” We noted last week that this is a intense and permanent longing to be in the realm and way of Jesus. To live with Him, according to the practices of His household. In the familiar passage of Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul says the same thing in essence:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [intimacy]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

5. It is a protecting love (John 10:27-28)

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Even as the Father loves the Son and protected Him, so too are believers protected by the Son as an expression of His love for them.

6. It is a pre-eminent love (Psalm 8:4-6; John 17:25-26)

4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!

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What is man that God would take such rebellious, sinful creatures as ourselves and yet bestow upon us such glory and majesty? Charles Wesley penned it correctly saying, it is “love divine, all loves excelling...” It is love of all loves. For the love of the Son toward His own is nothing less than the love of Father toward the Son. Jesus says as much in John 17:25-26,

25 O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

So, we have seen how the love of the Father for the Son is the same love which the Son has for His own. But why is this important? What are we supposed to do with this information? Beloved, by Jesus’ own words, this truth it to be utterly transformational and brings us to our second point:

II. The exhortation to abide in Christ’s love (John 15:9b)

...abide in My love.

In light of how the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, Jesus exhorts or commands once again, “**abide in My love.**” Remember that to abide means to take up a permanent or continual residence – to remain in a certain place or stay under a certain influence. In John 15:4, that sphere is Christ Himself and now here in verse 9, we are to abide in the realm or sphere of this permanent, professing, plenteous, personal, protecting, pre-eminent love. Beloved, to state this in the negative, Jesus is saying in essence, “*Do not let yourself dwell or be found outside the realm or influence of My love, of My highest good for you.*”

How is such abiding done? We must be forsaking sin; we must be killing sin in ourselves before sin itself kills us. I don’t know what sin or sins each of you struggles with. It may be outward and apparent, or it may be something you simply play with deep in your heart, but all pride, any lust, all indifference to others, any apathy, and all laziness must be done away with. These and other sins like them place us outside the realm of the love of Christ. This doesn’t necessary mean you are not saved, but it does mean you are placing yourself in a dangerous position and to continue outside that six-fold plus love is to abide in yourself, or in the world and not Christ.

Beloved, let us learn to identify any and every sin in our lives as that which reveals to us that in that area, we are not abiding in His love, that we are not living for Him and in Him; that we are not walking by His Spirit, but gratifying our flesh to our own demise. Jesus lovingly exhorts each of us to “abide in His love” – are you abiding?

III. The example of abiding in Christ’s love (John 15:10)

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

When we ask ourselves the question, “Are we abiding in Christ?” Or, “Are we abiding in His love?” we invariably come to the question of “How do we know if we are abiding?” I mean, if you are like me, I am the king of justifying myself and my actions as being godly when sometimes, too many times, I am only pleasing myself. So what is the standard? Is there a formula by which I might measure this abiding in the love of Christ?

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In fact, Jesus gives us a formula of sorts; certainly the standard here in verse 10. The formula is this –*keeping the commandments of Christ equals abiding or remaining in the love of Christ. And conversely, abiding in the love of Christ equals keeping His commandments.* This formula is simply a repeat of the idea of John 14:15 where Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments.” In other words, there is no great expression of your living in the love of Christ than by knowing and keeping His commandments. In fact, Jesus uses that “just as” phrase again... “just as the Father loves Me...so I love you” back in verse 9 and now here, “just as I keep My Father’s commandments and thus abide in His love” – you in the same fashion, following My example, keep My commandments and thereby express your love for Me.

I wish we had more time to develop the applications of this, but remember that one of the commandments of Jesus is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. And in Luke 10, when asked the question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, that man, whose ethnic background made him most hated by the Jews and yet when a man had been bushwhacked on the way to Jericho, fellow Jews, a priest and a Levite would not help the injured man, but the Samaritan alone felt compassion and sacrificed time and resources to help this injured man. Beloved, might I suggest that *loving your neighbor simply means looking for opportunities to whole-heartedly and sacrificially serve anyone to the glory of God rather than either skimping by or avoiding such service all together.* Is this not what Jesus did for us, whole-heartedly and sacrificially serving God and us by obediently coming to this earth to be our Mediator and Sacrifice to the glory of God and to our glorious salvation?

When we are looking for opportunities to serve; not sitting back and waiting, but actively looking to serve God and others to God’s glory and the highest good of others, we are expressing to ourselves and others that we are abiding in the love of Christ.

IV. The expectation of abiding in Christ love (John 15:11)

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Consider this statement...the greatest of Sufferers was the most joyful of men. Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, exulted in the prospect of Gethsemane and the Cross. How could this be so? How could Jesus speak of “My Joy”? Because of what He knew to be true in His life. Jesus had –

1. Uninterrupted communion with the Father (John 4:31-32).
2. Of accomplishing His Father's will (Hebrews 10:7; Psalms 40:6; Luke 22:41).
3. Of anticipating the result of His great work (Isaiah 13:11; Hebrews 12:2).

It is this joy of Jesus that Jesus here promises is not only the possession, but the full possession of those who abide in His love. It is our Savior’s joy but it is given to us as we fellowship, as we obey and as we hope for His return. The idea of joy being made full implies a paradox. It is a joy that is both complete and yet growing. When one becomes a believer, he has joy, but it is not a joy that is filled up. Jesus promises the obedient, love abiding-disciple a cup of joy that will continually overflow. And like Jesus, while much of life may be filled with sorrow and heartache and crosses to bear, we may yet be joyful, always rejoicing as Jesus and puts into our

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hands a cup of joy which overflows. It is a paradox; but the Christian, though sorrowful, is always rejoicing. Consider Paul and the progression of thought in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10;

3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, 4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

Beloved, do you expect to experience the joy of Christ in your life? Regardless of your circumstances, regardless of your health, regardless of the economy, regardless of who is president; Jesus promises His joy in all such things, if we find comfort and encouragement by abiding in His love.

And such a joy is something that no one and no thing can take away from you. The joy of Jesus is given by Jesus and it is forever the believer's to dwell in. In John 16:22 Jesus says:

Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

Beloved, it is not in the power of this world to rob you of the joy of Jesus. It is not in the aptitude of the devil to dispossess you from this joy. It is not in the ability of circumstance to steal from you this joy. The only thing, or only one that can rob you of the joy of Jesus is when you is not abiding in the love, not remaining in the realm of Jesus' seeking your highest good to the glory of God.

Lord, help us to understand the depths of the love You manifest toward Your own Son; and help us to experience this great love as we, by Your grace and power, abide in You Son. Keep us Lord, from straying, from removing ourselves because of sin, because of vain pursuits of the flesh, from the fullness of the bounty of Your love we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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