

Session 4 Beholding the Father's Love

I. REVIEW: GOD LOVES US WITH ALL OF HIS HEART

- A. God is love—wholehearted love (1 Jn. 4:16). The essence of God's being is wholehearted love. From eternity past, the three persons in the Trinity have loved each other with all of their heart. This is how the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Spirit, etc. The only way that God loves His family (the Trinity and the Church) is with all of His heart and in great humility.
- B. The love burning in God's heart has at least five distinct yet deeply interrelated expressions.
1. ***God's love for God***: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
 2. ***God's love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.
 3. ***Our love for God***: God's very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
 4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God's love and for God's sake.
 5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 Jn. 4:19).
- C. The foundational premise in this teaching series is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). The measure of God's love for us is the way God loves within the Trinity. This quality of love is foundational to life in God's kingdom. Jesus called us to abide in love—to continually live in and stay *focused* on it. This is the main exhortation in the Bible.
- ⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***
- ²³***“...that the world may know that You [the Father]...loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)***
1. Jesus declared the truth of God's love twice on the night before He died (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). These statements seem unrealistic to our natural thinking. Just because we do not feel the power of this truth does not lessen its reality. Jesus has authority to teach on God's love.
 2. The way the Father and the Son love us is the ultimate statement of our worth. This truth gives every believer the right to view themselves as “God's favorite.”
 3. This is both the simplest and deepest truth in the kingdom.
- D. These two statements beckon us to become students of how the Father loves the Son. To abide in love includes studying the way the Father loves Jesus to gain insight into how God loves us. Pray, “Holy Spirit let me see and feel what You see and feel about the Father's love for me.”
- ¹***Behold what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)***
1. We are called to *behold* or understand the quality of the Father's love for us (1 Jn. 3:1).
 2. To behold God's love is to stay focused on it and not forget or leave it out of our various ministry assignments or study focuses. Study Scripture through the paradigm of love.

II. THE LORD ALWAYS LOVES IN FULLNESS

- A. The Lord always loves in fullness. He would deny His character if He ever loved in less than fullness. He never suspends any of His attributes—not even 1%. He will never diminish or grow in love, because His love is infinite in measure and eternal in duration.

⁶*“For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.”*
(Mal. 3:6)

⁸*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb. 13:8)*

1. The Lord is always 100% true to who He is. Never for one moment is God less than 100% loving or 100% wise or righteous, etc. God cannot ever be less than who He is; if He did, He would deny Himself—even if He was 1% deficient in one attribute.
 2. He is fully God in all of His attributes all of the time. Thus, He always loves in fullness within the boundary lines of redemption.
 3. The Father loves us in the way He loves Jesus because He only loves in fullness.
- B. He does not withhold His love when a sincere believer stumbles or struggles with sin. Our spiritual immaturity does not affect the way He feels about us. He never loves us less in this age than He will love us in heaven, when we will live in the perfection of the resurrection state.

III. JOY BASED ON LOVE

- A. As we experience God's love, we feel joy, or a *deep sense of well-being with confidence*, even in the face of disappointment, temptation, and persecution (Jn. 15:11). Jesus spoke these things to empower joy in the life of His people (v. 11).

⁹*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love...”¹¹*These things I have spoken to you, that...your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)**

- B. The joy of the Spirit is anchored in the intensity of how the Father loves the Son and how the Son loves us. Note three foundational truths related to experiencing God's joy in John 15:9:
1. The intensity of the Father's love for Jesus (v. 9a)
 2. The same intensity of Jesus' love for us (v. 9b)
 3. Abiding in love—focusing on and experiencing a measure of God's love (v. 9c)
- C. The context in which Jesus promised God's joy gives us insight into the type of joy He spoke of. He referred to a holy joy that is deep, sacred, and powerful. This joy empowered the disciples to walk in victory soon after the devastating experiences that occurred soon after Jesus spoke these words. They suffered the shocking disappointment of Jesus' sudden death, the deep shame of betraying Him, and the threat of death and imprisonment from the political authorities, along with their normal temptations in life.
- D. We are called to experience a transforming joy that is based on encountering God's love. We must never be content with a silly, superficial substitute of the Spirit's joy that some promote.

IV. THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR US

- A. The world will know that the Father loves His people with the same intensity that He loves Jesus. His love will be openly displayed before all the nations. This love will be manifest in such fullness that unbelievers will see it in part in this age and in fullness in the millennial kingdom.
²²“The glory which You gave Me I have given them...²³that the world may know that You [the Father]...loved them as You have loved Me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold [experience] My glory...” (Jn. 17:22–24)
- B. Jesus has deep desire that His people be very near to Him forever (Jn. 14:3; 17:24; Heb. 10:22). He wants us near to Him in partnership to see the earth filled with the Father's glory (Hab. 2:14). In His most devastating hour when facing the cross, we gain insight into some of His motivation. Here we see the *why* behind the *what* of redemption. Why did Jesus create and redeem us?
¹⁴For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD... (Hab. 2:14)
- C. God's glory includes His burning love, infinite power, great wisdom, and majestic splendor. His greatness is seen most clearly in the quality of His love—the way He uses His power. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of His glory, especially His wholehearted love for people. In John 17:24, Jesus defined this glory through a relational paradigm (not a power paradigm).
- D. Jesus promised the saints that their persecutors would see how much He loved them.
⁹“I will make them [unbelievers]...to know that I [Jesus] have loved you.” (Rev. 3:9)
- E. Jesus set forth a relational paradigm of the second coming. Scripture repeatedly emphasizes Jesus desire to be with us (Lk. 23:43; Jn. 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; 1 Thes. 4:17). In John 14:3, Jesus' coming can include His resurrection appearances and the coming of the Spirit to be in them.
²“In My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you...³I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (Jn. 14:2-3)
- F. Revelation 3:21 is one of the most dramatic statements related to our function in the age to come. He wants us *near* Him, in close proximity to His heart and authority. He wants us to have *ownership* in His plan to fill the earth with glory and not to be “disassociated spectators.”
²¹“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...” (Rev. 3:21)
- G. God gave the dominion, or the primary leadership, of the earth to humans (Gen. 1:26-28). It was an eternal decree that He never took back after Adam sinned. The use of “all” is the language of love. It was always God's plan to fill the earth with the glory of God in partnership with humans.
²⁶God said, “Let Us make man in Our image...let them have dominion...over all the earth...” (Gen. 1:26)
- H. Paul emphasized the Lord giving His people all things (v. 22) pertaining to the earth (v. 23).
²¹For all things are yours: ²²whether...the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. ²³And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Cor. 3:21–23)

- I. David was overwhelmed at seeing the dignity of the redeemed in God's sight (Ps. 8:4-6). He wanted to understand why the Lord is so mindful of humans. What is it that moves Him so deeply towards us? The answer is not found in any inherent goodness in us, but in His greatness.
⁴What is man that You are mindful of him...⁶You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet... (Ps. 8:4-6)
- J. God has a message that He wants to demonstrate—the exceeding richness of how kind He is. We have such close proximity to His heart and authority (v. 6). We are vessels of His glory, even “trophies of grace,” that will forever display how loving, kind, and powerful He is (v. 7).
⁶He...made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:6-7)
- K. The principalities and powers (both angels and demons) are described as understanding God's plan by looking at His salvation and treatment of the Church (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12).
⁹To make all see...the mystery [hidden plan], which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God...¹⁰that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places... (Eph. 3:9-10)

V. THE HYMNS OF REVELATION

- A. The altogether worthy One who is ***so high*** (transcendent) went ***so low*** (immanent) in love to bring us ***so near*** (as kings with authority and priests near to Him) because we are ***so dear*** to Him (His love). The hymns of Revelation bring together these truths of His greatness expressed in His great love and desire for us to be with Him as kings (authority) and priests (near His heart).
⁵Jesus Christ...the ruler over the kings of the earth...to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God... (Rev. 1:5-6)
- B. The revelation of Jesus' worth to us is a most glorious theme. We will never exhaust its fullness. The revelation of *His worth to us* is magnified in seeing *our worth to Him* in His grace. The storyline in His heart includes our value to Him. Jesus did not die for angels. Why would He go to this extreme for us? The answer is found in who He is and the quality of love He possesses.
⁹“You are worthy...for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood...¹⁰And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:9-10)

VI. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (*i.e.*, FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

Ask each to pick one question—after everyone answers one, then pick another to answer (if time permits).

1. Which point in this session would you like more understanding of?
2. Which point most inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
3. Which point do you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you elaborate on it?
4. What is one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?