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Love pt. 2

Last week we started talking about love. And like all spiritual things, when they start to change from true concepts to living realities, they turn out to be a completely different animal than we thought. We have seen that with so many things. Truth, and faith, and glory, and wisdom and whatever. All of these things turn from something you believe in or know about into an encounter with the living Christ. Truth is no longer just doctrine, but a Person. Faith is not your beliefs, but His mind working in you. And on down the line.

I know I say all of that like a broken record, but it never ceases to amaze me how much I thought I knew about something in which I had not yet seen Christ, and therefore had not yet seen anything.

That is how it has been with love. And I started talking last week about how we need to be willing to trade in our imaginations for the reality of God's love. It is not that God doesn't love you. God's love is exceedingly, abundantly beyond our natural thoughts regarding it. It is just that until we are willing to hand over the preconceived illusion, there is no ground in our soul to face the truth.

And though the illusions and imaginations have perhaps become quite comfortable and comforting, the reality is worth the exchange.

We talked last week about how our hearts demand God love us just the way we are. And yet God's answer to the way that we are is the cross, to offer us a new life in His Son. He has crucified one seed and made us partakers of another. And yet, our unrenewed minds see ourselves according to something he has already put away, and we want him to accept what he has put away. We won't get back into that, but the truth is that we are not even the person that we are demanding God to love except in the imaginations of our own carnal minds. It is like demanding your earthly parents to love and accept you as a giraffe. But son, you're not a giraffe. Yes, I am. Now love me as a giraffe. No, it's better than that son.

Anyway, in the natural mind we assume we know what God's love is. We assume we know what loving the brethren is. As I mentioned last week, we are all familiar with the verses in 1 John where John tells us that God is love. But the problem is that rather than letting the revelation of God by His Spirit become to us the definition of what love is, we bring our definition of love into the picture and use it to define God. We say, in effect, I already know what love is, and therefore God must be like this, do this, feel this, etc.

Well, whenever we do that we exchange the truth of God for a lie. We create God in our own image and likeness. And though we fall in love with doctrines that tickle our ears, we have not come to know the Lord.

I mentioned last week that quite a while back I began to realize that I didn't really know what love was. I knew what people said it was. I knew that everybody valued it, or at least valued what they thought about it, and taught and felt about it. And yet I knew that it had to be something far more than what the natural mind is familiar with. In talking to some of you this past week, it seems that many of you had come to the same conclusions. Lord, I know what its not, now help me come to know what it is.

That's a great place to start. One of the first things that I began to see in my heart was that my understanding of love was what the Bible calls the "love of the world". That doesn't mean that I only loved worldly things. That just means that what I knew love to be was "of the world". A worldly kind of love.

1 John chapter 2 talks about the love **for** the world and the love **of** the world. Its really the same thing. He says this "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is **of the world**". Well, it began to dawn on me that just about everything I loved, cared about, gave attention to, gave time to, gave myself to, was something that was important to me for some sort of personal gain. It seems kindof obvious now, but I had never really seen it so clearly. And when I stopped gaining from anything that I supposedly loved, my love often began to dry up. Which demonstrated to me that my love, human love, was inextricably connected with self gain.

I didn't like that, but I couldn't really deny it. You know, you take your dog for instance. Man's best friend. Well you love your dog. Nothing could change the way you feel for your little furry friend. Except one day he unexplainably no longer has any interest in you, nor respect for you, nor affection whatsoever. On top of that he doesn't listen, doesn't obey, and starts doing things that are, rather than pleasant and enjoyable, irritating and costly. He poops all over your house. He eats your shoes. Whatever. Guess what? Time to take your dog for a drive. Suddenly the feelings aren't the same. Where'd the love go? Well, it went toward a new puppy who will be far more suited to your desires. Unfortunately that can be true of cars, and houses, and friends, and family, and whatever.

Lets be real. The kind of love that we are naturally familiar with is generally a kind that seeks its own gain. And in the occasion that gain is no longer in the picture, or it has been fully attained, maximized, love seems to go out the window. There's a story in the Bible about one of David's sons named Amnon. He fell in love with his sister Tamar. Well, I wont go into the details of that story, it's a little bit heavy, but the point is that once he takes by force the object of his intense love, once his gain has been obtained or maximized, he turns around and hates her.

➤ **2Sa 13:15** Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone. (i.e. I'm done with you, I've gotten what I wanted)

What seemed like such a passionate love for her turned out to be nothing more than a passionate love for himself.

Well, that may seem like an extreme story, and maybe it is. But I started to see things in my heart that resembled that. **And what, at length, I began to see was that as long as I was alive, love would have me as its goal. In other words, as long as I remained the life, as long as I had not been conformed to His death, then love could only be an attraction, a fondness, an affection, an emotion that had to do with taking things around me unto myself.**

It sort of looked like a boomerang. I would give out, so long as it eventually made its way back to me.

I'm jumping ahead of where I wanted to go with this, but I'll bring it back around in a minute. **You see, true love is the pouring out of life, not the taking of life. Not the gathering unto myself all that I want from life. Real love, by nature, is the out-pouring of life, which is the very nature of God, evidenced in the relationship between Christ and the Father, but working in us through faith.** There's the nutshell right there. I'll say it a bunch more times as we work through this series.

Love is the reality, the nature, of a selfless outpouring of life. And I said that it is evidenced in the relationship between Christ and the Father because Jesus spoke of the Father's love in that way.

- **Joh 3:35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.
- **Joh 5:20** For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does.
- **Joh 13:3** Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into *His* hands,
- **Joh 16:15** All things that the Father has are Mine.

Here we have a full and total sharing of life. Love – a giving of all that He has. A showing of all that he is doing. And Jesus receiving and walking in that love by abiding in that life. Doing nothing of his own initiative. Saying nothing but what the Father is saying.

And right there is the nature and reality of God's love for us. Not just a feeling he feels. Not just an emotion and a fondness. But the total sharing of life through the cross. The giving of all that he has. The offering to us Christ's death as our own, Christ's burial as our own. And Christ's life as our resurrection from among the dead. Even as He said "I am the resurrection and the life", and "the dead who hear my voice shall by Me live"

What greater love could there be then that? What greater love is there than a man lay down his life for a friend? How could mere emotions compare with the absolute and total giving, imparting of life?

And how do we receive this love? By living by this life, and not our own. Receiving the love of God is not just saying thank-you for loving me. You can feel thanksgiving for being loved while still rejecting the love of God. Maintain your life and you are rejecting the love. Hold onto your life, refuse the cross, refuse conformity to death, obedience to death, and what you are refusing is the love of God poured out in your heart. To hold on to your life is to reject his love.

- **Joh 15:9** As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you; now abide in My love.

As the Father has shared, given all that He is and has to me, and I abide in Him, so now I am loving you in the same way. Now I am giving, sharing all that I am, all that I have with you, Now you abide in me. Receive my love. Abide in my love.

So there it is – love, the out-pouring of life, which is the very nature of God, evidenced in the relationship between Christ and the Father, but working in us through faith.

And this love works in us through faith. In other words, only as this life, His life, is formed in you can you love in this way. Only as you walk by the faith of the Son of God, the mind of Christ, the renewed mind, can love be working in you.

You'll notice many Scriptures speaking about faith manifesting itself in love.

- Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any strength, but faith working through love.
- Eph 1:15 Therefore I also, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints,
- Eph 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- 2Th 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, my brothers, as it is right, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you abounds toward one another;
- 1Ti 1:5 But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned,

You see, here we have faith manifesting, expressing itself in love. The mind of Christ working in you the nature of Christ. Faith working through love is not talking about you acting on your beliefs. That's how we carnalize it. You know – "I believe these certain things to be true, and therefore I better go show people what I believe". No. Faith

working through love is the mind of Christ working in you so that you pour out life rather than taking things around you for yourself.

And that love is simply contrary to what we are by nature. What we have by nature is not life, and more than that, cannot really be poured out because it is by nature self-serving. Only the nature of Christ working in us by faith lays down its life. Only Christ working in us can truly bring us to love. And though many things look like this love outwardly, the natural man will only lay down something if his return will be greater.

Joh 15:13 No one has greater **love** than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Here it is, the laying down of life. But this is impossible for that natural man. **Life cannot be laid down for another, not really, until it is first lost at the cross. So long as you and I live, our life will seek its own.** But when life has been lost through the working of the cross in you, the conformity to His death, then it can be laid down for its friends.

And that is because a person coming by way of the cross has both found all that life could ever be in gaining Christ, and lost all that was once gain to self. In fact, they have lost the very self who we served. Then only can love come forth. Love then becomes the natural outflow of that reality. Love then becomes the pouring out of ourselves for the body of Christ. **And what you have found in Him you pour out. And what you have lost of yourself ceases to make its demands, ceases to seek its own.**

And this is why Jesus talks to us about loving our enemies. He says even a heathen loves those who love them. Well, that's just what I'm saying. Anybody loves when it is gain unto themselves. What kind of love is that? –Jesus asks. Well that is our kind of love. That is the love of the world. That is the love of the natural man, and Jesus says its nothing. If we, as those who are in Christ, love in that way, how are we any different than the world? Well, we're not.

The only person who can love an enemy is somebody that loves with nothing to gain, and everything to be poured out. You're not after anything other than, as Paul says, to spend and be spent for their souls. How can you love an enemy unless you seek nothing from them, keep no record of wrongs, and desire only to spend and be spent for their souls. You can only love an enemy when you've been conformed to His death, and His life abounds in you.

And so the law demands that we “love one another as ourselves” – demands something that we could never do. Everything of the Law was like that – demanding something that we could not do... and so Paul calls it a ministry of condemnation. You say “that's not fair”. But its not that its not fair, its just not you. It describes another. It speaks to another. Jesus makes it fair when He gives you His nature, His righteousness, and the grace to live by His life. That's more than fair. That's the mercy of God.

But the Law demands a love that could never be obeyed by you, but can be fulfilled in you as you walk by His Spirit and not by your flesh. Praise God, that's the truth.

God commanded a lot of things in the law of Moses, and yet love is said many times in the New Testament to be the fulfillment of it. The New Testament never one time says to obey the law. Search it out. However, it says several times that we can fulfill the law by walking in love. And that is more or less synonymous with abiding in Christ.

“As the Father has loved Me, I have loved You, abide in My love” Yes, live by that life. Live by what is the love of God poured out in your hearts. What is the love of God poured out in your hearts? It is Christ. It is new life in Him. Romans 5:5 “Hope (really, expectation) does not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Spirit He has given” You see? Hope doesn’t disappoint us because we have already received the full outpouring of God’s love in Christ in our hearts, and that which we have received bears its fruit, has its growth in us. Faith brings expectation. Expectation gives way to manifestation. Hope does not disappoint. What he has planted will grow. Faith, hope, and love.

Well, anyway...I began to face something. Not only is human love quite different than the love of God, it is, in fact, just the opposite. **One is the desiring and attaining and adoring of that which we take unto ourselves. The other is selfless outpouring of all that we have.** And that is hard to accept. It would be much easier to accept that God just needs to change or sanctify or redirect our love. I remember praying that the Lord would re-direct my passions towards His purposes. Well, its hard to accept that we need an entirely different love altogether.

And, you see, right there is the love of God for you and I. The love of God for you and I consists of the selfless outpouring of all that He is and has. “For God in this manner loved the world that He gave His only Son”. “Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us”. “In this the love of God was revealed in us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.” You see, there is the love of God.

Not just an emotion. Not just something he feels. Not a fondness and desire for us unto His own gain. Not a bigger version of our love. But the actual outpouring of His life unto us. The sharing of all that He is and has in Christ with those who will live in and by Christ. The full giving of Himself and His name and His glory and His love to those who will accept His death as their death and His life as their life. Here is the love of God revealed. And here is how we accept and walk in the love of God.