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Love pt. 1

I have a few different things spinning around in my head, but the biggest thing on my mind right now is love. I feel like the Lord has just begun to open up my understanding with regard to love recently, and so I'm going to try to share what I have been seeing.

This is a touchy topic, and I suppose I could get into some trouble if I'm not careful. The reason it is a touchy topic is because everyone instinctively thinks they know what love is based on the experiences of the soul, and they generally have very high regard for whatever their opinion is. To step on a definition of sanctification is one thing, but to step on a definition of love is quite another.

But that may be what we need to do. We need to step on every concept that has as its definition and substance anything from the natural mind and come to see all spiritual things defined in and by Christ who is their substance.

Love as it is known in the mind of man is an experience of the soul having to do with fondness or desire or longing or attachment or affection. And the object of that attachment or fondness is something that we think to be good or gain in one way or another. I don't know how somebody could argue with that. The reason we "love" things, according to our most familiar definition, is because of what we gain by them or the enjoyment that we have in them. And love becomes an action, a verb, when we act out those emotions.

And I am not saying that that is all worthless. I'll let you decide what you think about that. But I am willing to say to you this morning that fondness and attachment unto personal gain...or nice things done for that purpose, or nice things said because of that fondness, is not really what the term "love" has to do with in the bible. It is not the nature of God's love for us. The nature of God's love for us is not simply fondness for Adamites. Nor is that the reality of love that He desires us to grow up into. Let me say it even plainer - doing or saying nice things because we like somebody is not God's understanding of love.

And it doesn't take very long of reading the Bible before you are confronted with this. Before you get very far in the Old Testament you see God casting Adam out of the garden, rejecting Cain, rejecting Ham, rejecting Ishmael, Esau, "Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated" Come on, God! Where's the love? That's not very nice.

Then you see nations rejected, cut off, cast out, and killed. You see the world flooded and all life except for one destroyed. ? You see cities burned with fire. And it doesn't take very long to say "I thought this was a God of love". And you hear people saying "the God of the Old Testament is not a God of love". Or He seems like a different God than the God of the New. Well, that's nonsense, we've just never understood God or love.

And it doesn't take very long to read the New Testament before we start seeing Jesus calling Pharisees hypocrites, broods of vipers, white washed tombs, etc. Not to mention turning over their little booths in the temple, whipping their cattle, telling a Gentile woman that it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs. I recently saw a bumper sticker that read "who would Jesus bomb?". I suppose it was an anti-war statement. But the reality is that Jesus would and did bomb the entire Adamic race at the cross...and that was far more severe a judgment than the even the type and shadow in the flood when He destroyed the natural life of the entire inhabited earth.

Now, I am not bringing these things up because I don't think that God is loving. My goodness, the love of God is far far far greater than I ever thought or dreamed when I had made up in my mind what it was. It far surpasses what I could ever comprehend. And what I am going to try to explain today will never do justice either to what that love is. I can hardly find words to describe the awesomeness of God's love. God is certainly not only loving, but is, in fact, love. And that love for us in Christ is exceedingly abundantly beyond any concept of love or any human emotion.

His love is far greater than I ever imagined. The reality is far greater than the concept that I had imagined. But sometimes you have to let go of the imagination in order to find the reality. So the question is - what do you think that means? What do you understand love to be? What is love?

Now we have all read the verse that says "God is love". But the problem with that verse is that we all approach that verse thinking that we know what love is and then we define God according to our definition of Love. We say, "well, I know what love is, and so if God is love, then God must be like this, and do that, and feel this". And so **rather than allowing Him to be the definition of love, we have defined Him by our definition of love.** What a tragedy. What a joke, really.

We always do that. Its kindof like the time that I was trying to explain to my 4 year old, Ezra, how fast an airplane went. I said that I flew all the way to Phoenix in 4 hours. And he looked at me with this look of complete comprehension and told me that he already knew what fast was. He then began running around the room as fast as he could. And in his mind, this was the definition of fast. Suddenly the speed of my air travel was defined in Ezra's little mind as how fast he could run from the stairs to the coffee table.

That's a goofy analogy, but that's what we do. Oh, Dad, I already know what fast is, so now I understand the speed of an airplane. God, I already know what love is, so now I understand what you are like. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

We certainly don't understand love, or anything spiritual for that matter, until spiritual understanding is worked into our mind by the renewing of the spirit of our mind. We don't know anything about anything until Christ our life is revealed.

And that was on my heart back when I taught on faith and hope. If you'll think back to last summer I think I spent a couple months or more talking about faith. The Lord had really begun to open up my window with regards to faith. And I began to see that faith was really seeing with His eyes. Faith was really the mind of Christ being worked into you. Faith was the view of spiritual reality that remains when Christ begins to be revealed. Faith isn't something the natural mind does. The natural mind can believe doctrines, but that is not faith.

And we spent a lot of time talking about that. And just mentioning it now makes me want to talk about it some more. Faith sees a finished work. Faith stares into the face of Christ. Faith sees Him who is unseen, a city that has foundation, a city not of this creation. Faith sees all of that through the Spirit of God opening the eyes of our heart. And what faith really brings us to is to a sharing of His view. His mind. His wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. And that is why 10 times in the New Testament the literal translation reads "the faith of the Son of God" or "The faith of Christ". And then we walk in His view, His mind, His faith, and not by sight.

Ok, enough on that. But then there was hope - which more accurately should be translated expectation. Expectation. True faith always gives birth to expectation. Faith always sees this finished work and the only thing that needs to happen is that what He has finished at the cross now becomes seen and substantiated in you. Faith sees the planted Seed, and now there is just the question of expectation. Formation. Its like a pregnant woman. You're beyond hoping for a baby. Now its just a matter of expectation.

And the expectation of the Father when He planted that Seed slowly becomes your only expectation. It becomes the expectation in your knowing of Him. It becomes your expectation in gathering together as a body. It becomes your expectation in reading the Scripture, in prayer, in fellowship. The expectation of His appearing.

But then love. Faith hope and love. And now, these three remain, faith hope and love, and the greatest of these is love. And that is what now remains in Christ. Nothing that you add. Nothing for you to do. Just Christ all and in all. It's Him seen as foundation, Him coming forth in formation, and Him in expression. Now these three abide - faith, hope, and love.

But you might remember that when I got to love, all I really said was that love is the manifestation of what faith sees and hope expects. Love is not just a human emotion, it is Christ. It is His nature. It is His character. But I didn't teach much on love, because that is all that I really saw clearly. I knew it deserved 10 weeks, 10 years, and I couldn't hardly give it one Sunday. I mean I could have rambled on about how important love is and blah blah about loving God and your neighbor, etc....in the way that any person could do. But I mean 10 minutes really speaking out from the mind of Christ concerning the reality of love as it is in Christ.

I knew I didn't see enough and so I thought it wise to wait until He brought love more into the light.

And let me just suggest to you that that is really a helpful thing to learn to do. I've learned this the hard way, and for some reason I often need to re-learn this. You may have heard me say this, but I can't hear this enough. If you bump into a verse or a term or a concept or something that doesn't seem to make sense, or you know you aren't seeing correctly, or seems to run counter to what you have already seen in Christ, don't push on it with your natural mind. Somebody told me that once "Jason, don't push on that verse with your carnal mind, it will never open up to you that way".

I have learned simply to just leave it alone, understanding that it is simply not in my current field of view. It is not yet in the Light, but still in shadows. You can take your favorite book into a dark room and try and try to read it. You know there is

something there, but your effort doesn't accomplish anything. Only light can help. So leave it alone for now and trust Him to show it to you when you have seen what must be seen before that.

You see, there is always an order of comprehension. You cannot see something when there is no ground in your soul to see it. Desire is not the issue. The issue is spiritual comprehension. I cannot teach my kids geometry until they learn basic addition and subtraction. You can want to learn geometry with all of the zeal in the world and yet there is no ground for it to be taught. Geometry is an increased view of mathematic reality. It is not where you start, it is somewhere along the journey. So let the Spirit of God bring you into the knowledge of God according to the order of comprehension. According to the order that He shines light on each reality. You can't leap frog over one thing and grasp another because you happen to find it more interesting.

Here we go on a bunny trail...but I told you I had a bunch of things on my heart this morning. Listen, it's the same thing in the tabernacle. One of these days I'll start a series on the tabernacle. But you can't leap frog over the brazen altar and think you're going to comprehend the altar of incense. You can't do that. You see, the tabernacle was set up in a very particular order. It's the order that you encounter Christ. It is the order of experiencing Christ. First you encounter Him in that brazen altar where he takes you into a death and burial. You can't skip that and think that you're going to understand the next pieces of furniture. One view is the foundation for the other views. One comprehension is the basis for the further comprehension.

And, in my opinion, that is why the tabernacle is set up in a particular direction so that the Brazen Altar is on the east side and the ark is on the far west. You see, light first has to hit the brazen altar. The sun rises in the east. The first thing the light must hit is that altar where you comprehend that death. That all inclusive death. That death wherein He died as you and He died for you. And we won't get into all of that today, except just to mention that unless you understand you've been crucified with Christ, you'll never know what it means to become the fragrance of Christ unto God – which is what you'll find in the incense altar.

I'll leave all that for now. But I said all of that just to say that you can rest and enjoy the journey, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. He is faithful and He will do it. He started this work in you and will take you as far as you will let Him. You can count on that. He's not playing hide and seek with you, despite what you might have heard. He's not trying to hide, he's trying to take the veil off of your heart.

Anyway, I was talking about faith, hope, and love. And basically, I was saying that I didn't teach much about love because I knew that, though I could say a bunch of things, I couldn't say much that would be according to the truth as it is in Christ.

But here we are a year later and love has begun to open up to me. I knew that it wasn't just the human emotion. I knew that. I knew it was Christ. I knew that the human emotion was, at best, human, and so falling short.

But these last few months I began to understand something of the nature and reality of love. And I just want to look at God's love for us this week. Maybe next week we'll look at our love for Him. Or our love for each other. It's kind of all the same thing.

But I started to see in the Scripture that **the nature and reality of God's love was the giving/sharing/outpouring of His very life.** Sharing His life with those who would live by His life, and thus cease to live by their own. And I don't just mean that God's love compelled Him to share His life. I mean that that is, in fact, what love really is.

You see, here is where we need to step back from how we have defined love and therefore defined God. God's love isn't just doing nice things because He feels certain emotions. That's not really what His love is.. Love is far more than merely an emotion to God. And emotion that motivates Him. Love is not just what He feels. Love is what He is and does. That is why Scripture says "God is love". And "the love of God is manifested at the cross". Demonstrated there. Shown to us there at the cross.

His love for us is an invitation into a full participation of His life through His death.

Love is the full and unhindered giving of His life and nature and glory in and through the cross – and therefore the necessary rejection and destruction of everything else. How did God love you? He killed you and gave you the life of His Son. He loves you by crucifying you with His Son and causing that Son to be your life. He loved you by killing you. Wait? I thought you said He loved me? He wouldn't kill me, reject me, if He loved me! No, you see...He couldn't truly love you without crucifying you with Christ. That is how he manifested His love. **He took away what you were so that He could bring you into the experience of all that He is.**

And the reason we reject this is because we want to think of Him being quite fond of what we were. We don't know what we are, we only know what we were, and so we want Him to love that. But if He loves you He's going to have to remove from you all that is horrible and dead and in the way of good. And you see that is just what the cross is. It is the manifestation of this great love.

We know this with our own kids, but we can't understand it with God. We know that loving our kids is not only providing them with the good that you have and you are and you know, but also the constant removing from them of all that you see not to be good. Rejecting all that you know is not truly them. Taking from them that which is worthless, dangerous, evil, and dead. We know that. In the natural arena, we know love to be both the offer of all that is good and removal of all that runs counter to that.

But you see that that is exactly what the cross is. It is the love of God made manifest in the removal of all that is worthless, dangerous, evil, and dead. Namely, what you are by nature.

And a rebellious, blind, immature kid might say to his parents as he cusses, smokes dope, spews out anger, and lives in immorality...don't you love me just the way that I am? And its not that you don't love them, its just that you know that to love them is to remove from them and reject what they have come to be, and help them come to be what you know them to be. You must help them know even as they are known. Because only in that will they really experience themselves and their relationship with you.

Now that is in the earth. That is a shadow. But in Christ the love of God is made manifest in the cross. The love of God is made manifest in rejecting one kind and presenting the acceptable Son as the life of all that live. You are accepted in the Beloved.

Well, I thought God loved me just the way I am. Friends, God's thought about the way that you are is the cross. And the love of God is made manifest in the removing from you of all that is dead, deceived, and harmful (namely, YOU) and the giving to you of all that is life and real and good.

We say things like God hates the sin but loves the sinner. But we have to face the reality that God has crucified both the sin and the sinner and made us into an entirely new creation where it is Christ all and in all. That is how He sees us now in Him. That is how we are known. That is where and how we are loved. And it is only because we do not know who we now are in Him that we demand that a "loving God" accept us the way that we are. Well, my goodness, he did one better than that! He didn't just accept you as you are, He accepted you in the Beloved. He didn't just tolerate what you were. He gave you the very life, glory, and relationship of His Son. What greater love could there be than that?

But still the natural man will not face this. We will not see ourselves as we are known by God. We say that a God of love must love me just like this....**but the fact of the matter is that we Christians are not even who we are demanding God to love except in the imagination of our own unrenewed mind.**

Love is truly made manifest in the giving of His Son that we might live by Him.

You see, when we think of God's love for the world, we generally think of emotions that he feels for individual personalities. And though it is true that God knows and loves individual souls, that love is not merely a fondness, an emotion, an attachment that He feels for you as an Adamite. **The love of God for you is right here – that He offers you a death, burial, and resurrection. He offers you the death of His Son. The burial of His Son. His death as your death. And He offers you His Son as your resurrection from among the dead.** The dead who hear my voice will live.

We're running out of time. Let me just say a few things in summary, and then I want to just read you a bunch of verses to look at on your own time. This is just an introduction this week. Give this some time. It will start to come into focus.

The love of God is the full and unhindered giving, sharing of His life. That is how Jesus spoke of His experience of the love of God.

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.

And that is how we come to know and experience the love of God Christ. We come to know the love of God as we come to know more and more of all that He has given us in the gaining of Christ. We come to know the love of God in Christ. We come to experience and grow in that love. We are rooted and grounded in that love. The

love whereby God has made us co-heirs with Christ. The love whereby God has rejected what is dead, and brought us into He who is alive.

And then you can begin to see this very same love working even in the "God of the Old Testament" – which of course is the very same God of the New. You see this very love being demonstrated and testified to in the rejection of Cain and Ishmael and Esau. Not the individuals. God is no respecter of persons, of humans. But the love being demonstrated there whereby he rejects one seed and invites us to live by another. That is the love with which He rejected Saul as king. That is the love manifested in so many types and shadows of the reality that we have come to.

Let me just say this sentence again, and then read a few verses. The love of God is the full and unhindered giving, sharing of His life and that is known and experienced through the cross. Not just the historical event. His love isn't a historical event. The ongoing reality of that cross.

Joh 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.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; *yet* no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And *that* life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.

Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love *with* which He loved us
Eph 2:5 (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved),

Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it,

1Jo 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God. Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

1Jo 3:16 By this we have known the love *of God*, because He laid down His life for us

1Jo 4:9 In this the love of God was revealed in us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

1Jo 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation concerning our sins.