

060723
Jason Henderson
Akron Vineyard

Love pt. 3

A few weeks ago I started a series on love. We had a couple guest speakers for the last couple weeks, both of whom said quite a bit about love. I'd like to continue that series today, picking up where we left off and also trying to bring into more clarity some questions that some have asked in response to some things they have heard over the last couple weekends.

If you'll recall, we started by talking about the love of God. And we said that the nature and character of that love is the pouring out, or sharing, or giving, or inviting us into His life. That's really what it comes down to. Love, simply said, is the giving of life. And so it could be said that the love of God for you IS Christ – the life given, the life poured out, the life that we were invited into. God's love for you is Christ. God's love for you is Christ and Him crucified.

And then we took it from there and spent a Sunday talking about the reality that that kind of love, the outpouring of self, doesn't really exist in us by nature. There is perhaps a dim shadow of it in some relationships, like in some parent/child relationships...but even that has levels and layers of self woven into unseen places.

The love that we know by nature is a love that is attracted to and desires things around us to take unto ourselves. I love that hat, I've got to have it. I love that girl, she will be mine. I love chicken, I want to fill my stomach with it. I love computers, I spend all my time on the net. Whatever. A lot of our love is just a desiring for self. And when that is appropriate we call it love, and when it is inappropriate we call it lust. As long as its for MY wife its love! As long as its for MY toys, its not coveting.

But we begin to find out that the love that is of God, from God, seeks not its own gain. And right there we see we're in trouble. Paul says "love seeks not its own". Paul also says "do nothing out of selfish desire". Well, we're in trouble. And so we looked a couple weeks ago at the reality that only when our life has been lost at His cross can we genuinely love. And what I began to see concerning myself 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.

And so the cross needs to have its work in us before we can love. 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 that sought his own gain. 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.**

So, that is just a re-cap of the first couple weeks of talking about love. But this morning I wanted to try to tackle this question of the love of God for us who are in Christ, and the love of God for the world. I had a bunch of questions along these lines. It is so easy to misunderstand. You take one step away from comprehending all things in the light of Christ and Him crucified, and you have taken one step towards a lie.

Paul said "when I came to you I determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified". Why? Because all wisdom and understanding and knowledge proceed out from there. You cannot understand anything apart from that reality, that light, working in your soul.

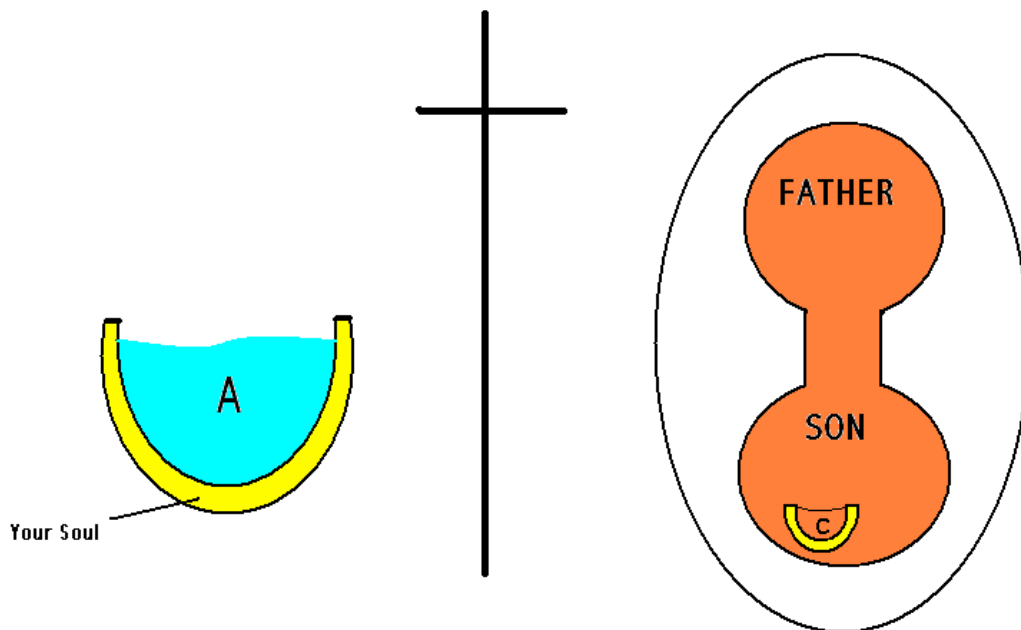
Once a spiritual reality, a spiritual term, like salvation, or faith, or love, or wisdom is separated from its substance, which is Christ Himself, and it becomes a thing, a teaching, concept, then you can go any direction with it. You can make it mean almost anything you want it to mean. Strip it of its substance, and your mind, your heart, becomes the substance of it. And whenever we do that we have lost all understanding. Can you understand what I'm saying?

Take Christ as the substance out of anything spiritual and love becomes whatever Bob Dillon said. Truth becomes whatever you want, in your heart, to believe. Hope becomes whatever you are waiting for. My Lord...this is so important.

Only when love is seen in and as its substance, which is Christ, can we know anything of it. And then it is not a matter of learning about love, love is known by the revealing of Him who is love.

Well, anyway...how does God love you? How does God love the world? I'm going to use some diagrams today to attempt to teach this. I love diagrams, but I try to avoid them on Sunday mornings for the sake of the people who pick up the CD's or listen online. But, for those of you listening to this, I will have these diagrams available on our website in the text of this sermon. You'll probably benefit from glancing at that if only to get the diagram in your head. The hard part is that you don't really know what I'm pointing at as I'm speaking.

Draw diagram:



Ok, let me quickly describe what you're looking at. I am almost reluctant to try to lay this out so neatly. The danger with trying to describe and define all of this so precisely to the natural mind is that it can become an intellectual exercise, and not a spiritual reality. But nevertheless, it might clarify some questions. On the left side of this diagram you see a natural man. And what you have here is this natural man depicted as a vessel, which is this yellow cup, containing a blue substance, which is your adamic nature. Your soul is the vessel of a nature that you were born with. Your soul and that nature are not the same thing. Prior to new birth, that adamic nature is the nature and character and kind and seed of your soul, but the old man and the soul are not the same thing. The cross destroys the one and saves the other by causing it to partake of the divine nature.

This adamic nature, is what the Bible often refers to as the old man. It's the wrong seed. It's the wrong kind. It is the rejected one. Your soul, however, is really you. It is your mind, emotions, and will that are influenced in every way by the nature that works in your soul. That nature is Adamic. Scripture says in a few places that that nature is actually demonically influenced and energized. Jesus tells the Pharisees that their father is the devil. Paul speaks of the "spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience". The adamic nature is the expression of the enemy's kingdom. There is no nice way to say that.

But keep in mind that you are a soul. Now, prior to Christ living in you and being revealed in you, prior to the living Word dividing soul and spirit, prior to comprehending what it means to put off the old man and put on the new...in other words, prior to new birth and then some spiritual understanding, your soul and the adamic nature are so intermingled that you do not distinguish them. They are, as far as you are concerned, the same. It's just you...as far as you know. This is how I am, how I think, how I feel, how I hate, how I want, how I...etc. It's just you. It's the only you you've known. We completely identify with that nature. We are lead by it and become the expression of it in all things. It has become us. There is no ability

prior to new birth to differentiate between this adamic nature, this sin nature, and the soul.

Ok, now hold that thought for a minute and lets look over at the other side of the diagram. Here we have our familiar diagram of the reality of being in Christ. Now this is not supposed to be a diagram of the Godhead, the Trinity. Somebody asked me once where the Spirit of God is...I don't know. This isn't a drawing of a doctrine, it's a reality. Try to see past its limitations.

Remember we spent some time looking at this diagram. The Father loves the Son. The Father shares life with the Son. We looked at some of these love verses a couple weeks ago. "All things that the Father has are mine" "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands". "The Father loves the Son and shows him all things He is doing". Here you have love seen between the Father and the Son in a total and complete sharing of life, love, glory.

Well, our salvation is coming into that one Son, and therefore into that unique relationship between Father and Son. What we call new birth, what we call salvation, God calls "being in my Son".

Terry drew a diagram a little bit like this a couple weeks ago. He had the Godhead up here, and then God sending His Son motivated by love, and then he drew the world down below with an invitation to come live in that Son. Same idea. I could do this exact same teaching with that diagram.

So, remember, you did not come over to this side and start your own unique, individual relationship with God here on the side. You came into the one eternal relationship that God has had with His Son. **He has made that one relationship available by the cross And that is the definition of love.**

So here is where we can start dealing with the "how's" and "what's" and "where's" of God's love. Can you see in this diagram that the love of God is IN CHRIST JESUS. You could even say that the love of God IS CHRIST JESUS. Because that is where all that He is and all that He offers is known and experienced. You know God in Christ. You know life in Christ. You know love in Christ.

Like we said, our experience of God's love is not an extension of this unique relationship over here (right side) outside of Christ (draw line to a little guy outside). Our experience of God's love is an including of you, yes, as an individual, inside Christ.

Can you see that? For God to truly love you, he brings you into the Son of His love. For God to lavish upon you, he makes you a partaker of this eternal covenant. For God to cause grace to abound to you, he brings you into the one who is made all things unto you. For God to love you, to truly love you, he has to bring you to where the love of God is a reality, is a relationship, is an experience of life, and can be known - in His eternal Son. Do you see that? Its not just some feeling that He has...it is making you accepted in and filled with this eternal life. Jesus says [Joh 6:57](#) "As the living Father has sent Me, and I live through the Father, so he who partakes of Me, even he shall live by Me."

Now people get confused here, and we're going to look at why. When JW was here he said that yes, absolutely...God loves you individually. But then he said that, in

fact, most people when they are seeking to be loved individually are really wanting to be loved independently of Christ. And that simply doesn't even make sense. The love of God is not a wispy emotion that flies around outside of Christ and hopefully it will land on you. The love of Christ is the full giving of life, love, and glory as they are experienced in the sharing of life...and that is only in Christ and through the cross. Let that sink in to your hearts.

He doesn't love you independently of Christ. That actually doesn't even make sense. But he loves you individually, as an individual soul, as an individual person, in and by Christ. And that is because, again, his love is the act of transferring you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the "Son of His love". Col 1:13 Spend some time in that verse. Its not just something he feels about Jesus and he also feels it about you. The love of God for you, the individual, IS Christ.

You see, God's love is far better than just an emotion that he feels for some guy out here. His love is the bringing of your soul through the cross into Himself, that "where I am, there you will be also". "I in the Father, you in me, and I in you". The love of God for you as an individual is to accept you in His Son.

Now in Terry's diagram, he drew the world down here below here and he made a statement about the rays of God's love shining even onto the unbeliever, even onto the cosmos of Adam. But then he also said that they, however, do not know it or experience unless they come to know it in Christ.

And that is just right. The "rays" of God's love do extend to the unbeliever. They extend to them in a constant, wide-open invitation to escape death and find new life in Christ. That love that He has in Christ is constantly before them as the way, the truth, and the life, that they can choose to accept by way of His death, burial, and resurrection. Its always there, offered to them even while they are dead in their trespasses and sins. Even while they blaspheme Him. Even when they do not love God. His love invites them up Jacob's ladder...out of one realm and into another. His love invites them through the call of His Spirit, through the myriads of types and shadows in the natural creation, through the spirit of man that has eternity in its heart. His love beckons them to come and die. To come through out of their death through his death. His love calls to hearts through the beauty and provision of the first creation pointing to the new creation. His love appears before them through those in whom his love is working. But only IN CHRIST can they ever find and know and experience the love of God.

God is not in union with the world. He is in union with His Son and everyone who dwells in Him and lives by Him. God is not in covenant with the adamic cosmos. He is in covenant with His Son, and as Isaiah says, he has given His Son as a covenant to His people. God does not share life with the world. He offers life to the world, but He shares life with His Son, and all who have come to dwell in Him. [Joh 17:21](#) "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us"

Do you see that that is exactly what Jesus is saying here? What else does he say about the world? [Joh 17:16](#) "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world". [Gal 6:14](#) "But may it never be for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world".

Do you see this? God's love for the world is the greatest love He could offer. It is the offering to them who are dead in sin to come through death unto new life. What an amazing love! And yet, it is far greater for us who are in Christ. Because to us who are in Christ it is far more than an offer, far more than an external taste – more than just "sun shining on the righteous and the unrighteous". It is the full experience, the full reality, the full covenant, the full glory, the full union, the full and complete giving of His Spirit without measure. We come to know the love of God for us in Christ.

And yes, again, that is for you as an individual. The reason I am stressing that today, and the reason that Terry was stressing that is because of a natural confusion that can work in your soul. You begin to see that its not all about us. That its not "independent" as we were saying above. Not I but Christ. You see that and have come to some spiritual comprehension of what that means. And that is good and wonderful and necessary.

And you also begin to see the judgment. That Adam is rejected. Adam is cut off. And somewhere along that journey, just about everybody starts to ask the question – well, does God love me? Is there anything of me on His radar screen, or have I as an individual disappeared? Well, its true you are hidden with Christ in God, and what you were by nature (the substance of this cup) is not seen, but you, your soul, the individual is loved of God and known of God. It is personal. It is individual. It is just not independent. God does not have another love to give you except to love you in Son.

So lets look back to our diagram to see if we can't understand this more clearly. On the one hand you have the Adamic nature, the old man, the Adamic man, the nature of sin. On the other hand you have the divine nature, the new man, Christ, the nature of righteousness. The one is the rejected seed. The other is the accepted, beloved son.

Well, who are you? You are the soul. You are the soul that is a vessel of either that adamic seed or Christ Himself. Do you see that. What is rejected and cut off and buried is that old man, that adamic man. Now it just so happens that that is pretty much the only "you" that you have ever known. Hebrews speaks of that as "sin consciousness" that needs to be cleansed. Remember we said in the beginning that prior to new birth our soul and our adamic nature are so intermingled that we do not distinguish them. As far as we are concerned they are the same. Its just you...as far as you know. It's the only you you've known. We identify with it. We are lead by it and become the expression of it in all things.

But in all reality, that is a kind, a seed, a nature. It is an expression of the enemy and his kingdom. We were born with it. But we are a soul. And at the cross, that kind, that seed is rejected, crucified, buried... and you, the soul (mind, emotions, individuality, traits of personality) are translated out of the kingdom of darkness and made to dwell in the kingdom of the Son of His love. We, the soul, the vessel, are made to partake of, be filled with, be given the accepted seed.

But you see, the carnal mind looks at all of this and says God needs to accept the blue substance here, and he does not. And to the carnal mind, that sounds like God hates me. I've had people tell me that they think I preach that God hates them. Friends, listen to me. God rejects the seed, the kind that is not Christ. The Old Man.

The adamic man... and in that lavishes loves your soul, saves your soul, by giving you Christ! There is not greater love for YOU than that!

The old man is rejected, but the soul is saved. The cross destroys the one and transfers the other into Christ, gives the soul a new birth. The cross destroys what you were, and then pours out love upon your redeemed soul.

That is such an amazing and unsearchable love. Remember, I said that we want to be loved just the way we are. And yet, the way he found you was dead in trespasses and sins. And so in His great love he made you alive together with Christ, raised you up with Christ, and seated you with Christ in heavenly places in order that he might lavish the riches of His kindness and grace upon you for all eternity. I didn't make that up, its in the Bible.

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 2:6** and has raised *us* up together and made *us* sit together in the heavens in Christ Jesus, **Eph 2:7** so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Friends, that is love! And that is love for you as an individual. And individual in Christ. An individual soul. But not independent of Christ. Its not Christ and you. The love of God for you IS CHRIST.

I was talking to JW Luman about this over lunch one day when he said "everybody says its me and Jesus, me and Jesus...but when are we going to wake up and see that God's love for me is Jesus?" And that hit me.

The very same love that accepts you in Christ is the love that also rejects what is not Christ. The very same love that raises you up with Christ is the love that buries you with Christ. The very same love that lavishes life upon you in Christ, is the love that calls everything else death. Can you see this?

Ok, we'll close with this. Look at this diagram, and lets just quote Galatians 2:20. I've been crucified with Christ. (there goes the old man). Nevertheless I live (wait, my soul is not annihilated) yet not I (but this is an all together different I working in me) but Christ lives in me.

Somebody said on Friday night...and I totally agree with this, in fact, I couldn't stress it enough. It is dangerous to preach the love of God without first comprehending the judgment of the cross. Because until our hearts face that judgment, the love of God will be seen as the acceptance of the wrong seed. It will be seen as fond emotion for the adamic man. It may be comforting to the soul, it may be refreshing to the ears, but it is a lie. God has rejected that nature, and saved your soul, loved your soul, by causing you, an individual, to be accepted in His the Son of His love.

And so now for us to accept the love of God in Christ, we must reject what He has rejected, and live in and by the life that He has given. Amen.