

# Knowing and Believing the Love of God

## Review: Confidence in love

- A. The fuel and foundation to sustaining passion in our pursuit of Jesus is a foundational understanding of His heart toward us. We love Him because He first loved us. [1 John 4:19]
- B. The Lord desires us to be confident in His love, for it to be a foundational reality in our hearts which releases us to living a sustained life of love, obedience, passion, sacrifice, endurance etc.
- C. The beginning of this journey rests upon our hearts knowing and understanding His heart. This is connected to beholding the glory of the Lord, or simply put knowing the movements of His heart. Exodus 34:5–7 is a core passage to what the Lord is like: merciful, gracious, longsuffering [patient], abounding in goodness, abounding in truth, and just.
- D. Condemnation is an enemy of confidence in love. [1 John 3:20–22] However, an understanding of His mercy and total forgiveness dismantles the power of condemnation in our hearts. Because He loves us, He forgives us; and not only does He forgive but He delights/desires to show us mercy. This is crucial in our approach toward God and how we respond in moments of weakness before the Lord.

## Knowing and believing the love of God [1 John 4:16]

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. **John 15:9**

...and have loved them [believers] as You [the Father] have loved Me [Jesus]. **John 17:23**

<sup>16</sup> And we have **known** and **believed** the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. **1 John 4:16**

- A. Many hear the verses above and do not allow them to have the profound impact upon the human heart that they are intended to have. We either hear and respond casually like “Oh that’s nice” or we dismiss them as ideal statements that apply to everyone but ourselves.
- B. However, John calls us to know and believe the love that God has for us. so the question remains, what is that love, what is our response to it, what is the resulting impact of that love in the human heart.
- C. We cannot simply have good thoughts about God; we need right thoughts about God.

## Love's greatest moment

- A. Scripture points over and over again to one pinnacle moment that is an eternal demonstration of the reality of the heart of God toward weak and broken humanity. The moment: when the Lord of glory hung upon the cross, bleeding and broken reconciling fallen humanity to a holy God.
- B. 1 John 3:16, 4:10, Romans 5:8, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:2 all declare the same thing: this is the love of God, Christ crucified.

<sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **1 John 4:10**

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. **1 John 3:16**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **Galatians 2:20**

<sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. **Ephesians 5:2**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

- C. This is the deepest expression of the love of God and the worth we hold before Him. Scripture says that while we were still in sin, still His enemies and without strength to contribute anything, Christ came and died.
- D. This is the reality of the heart of God we are called to encounter and drink from, and place the whole of our trust in. The cross is our confidence; our confidence before Him and our confidence of His heart toward us. We did nothing to deserve it, but out of His kindness, His love and mercy He pursued us and desires to win us over in love.

## Know and believe

- A. The greek word for 'know' is ginosko. This carries a knowledge that is only found in personal experience. It also denotes intimacy. [speaking of Adam and Eve, Adam knew Eve, speaking of Mary, she did not know a man]
- B. Believe means to place faith in, to rely upon, to adhere to. Our belief in His love is a result of knowing and encountering His love. Without knowledge, faith is impossible.

- C. Can we say with confidence what John declares: we have known and believed the love of God for us? Many Christians give voice and mental assent to this, but the fruit of it lacks.
- D. This is the process the Lord uses to bring maturity and depth in our love. We go on the journey of encountering His love then trusting in the truth of it beyond our circumstance and situation. This is the place where the bold declaration of Romans 8 comes from. Paul had walked with Jesus for years and now declares the reality of the love of God for him– that nothing could separate him from the love of God.
- E. The key question is how does this process work unto mature love?

## Abiding in love

- A. 1 John 4:16 and John 15:9–11 call us to abide or to remain vitally connected to the reality of His love. How do we do that?

9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have 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, **that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.** **John 15:9–11**

<sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. **1 John 4:16**

- B. Remaining connected to His heart, His presence, His truth and His love is founded in the place of loving obedience. [John 14:19–24, John 15:9–11, 1 John 3:24] The outworking of love is obedience, or simply put the fruit of love is obedience. If we are not walking in obedience [a reach and pursuit of obedience] we are not walking in biblical love.
- C. Abiding in love is not a life laid back minimizing sin and reducing the demands of the gospel [selfless living, denying self, serving others, humility etc.] It is actually a life characterized by a priority for His presence and for His glory. It is not human sentiment or romantic feelings, it is manifested in a laid down life, abandonment to Christ. [Jesus is the greatest example of this, Paul is another]
- D. As we encounter His heart of love and His truth, we purpose to believe and put it into practice. This is the process our hearts are won over and we walk through the fires of His love.
- E. Know [encounter] then believe [trust] His love and truth, displacing what we held onto and replacing it with His heart and word.

- F. 1 John 4:16–17 tells us that as we abide in His love, we mature in His love. This is the love that removes fear in our hearts. [<sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. <sup>17</sup> This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence...]

## Love that casts out fear

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect [mature] love casts out fear, because fear involves torment [punishment]. But he who fears has not been made perfect [mature] in love. <sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us. **1 John 4:18–19**

- A. A life that is marked by encountering His love, walking in obedience and trusting in the reality of His love despite circumstance is a love that is maturing. This is our greatest weapon against the assault of fear in our life/heart.
- B. Fear is what caused humanity to run from God in the beginning instead of to Him after sin.
- C. Fear is based on a distortion of truth acquired through our life experiences. We have incurred injuries, trauma, tragedy that teaches us to live guarded and independent lives apart from a loving trust upon Christ. The devil uses our life experiences to amplify fear and lies to keep us from walking in truth, love and freedom.
- D. **2 Corinthians 10:3–6** speaks of this reality and the nature of spiritual warfare. A stronghold consists of paradigms, beliefs and worldviews that are shaped by lies and half-truths, connected to experience that exalts itself above the knowledge of God [truth, the reality of His heart]
- E. The avenue of experience that brought lies is the same that will bring freedom—encountering His love and truth [know and believe] Jesus said we would **know** truth and it would bring freedom [John 8:32]. This is crucial in our pursuit of Christ.
- F. Truth of His heart toward us and our stance before Him begins to cast out fear and anything that has its origin in works, condemnations, accusation, shame, guilt, self-hatred etc. His love begins to erode the foundation of the pillars that support lies in our heart acquired over the years. It roots out the tares sown among the wheat by the enemy. [Matthew 13]

## Freedom from torment

- A. Love also frees our hearts from the consequences of fear– a life of torment. Torment is also translated as punishment and carries the meaning of the consequence of being found guilty of a crime and the ensuing punishment/condemnation.
- B. Because of Christ, we are free from His wrath and condemnation. We were guilty and sentenced to eternal separation, but Christ took upon Himself our sin and the punishment we deserved. Thereby releasing us from the condemnation and sentence we deserved, instead giving us grace and mercy.
- C. We now stand before Him justified and acquitted of every charge because of the blood of Jesus, our atoning sacrifice.
  - a. Justified: 2 Cor 5:14–21, Romans 3:21–26, 5:1,18, 1 Cor 6:11, Gal 3:24
  - b. Pure: Col 1:19–22
- D. Our Father does not condemn us or punish us, but lovingly corrects and disciplines us for our own good and to produce in us holiness and righteousness. [Hebrews 12:5–11]
- E. Therefore we can have confidence that God enjoys us in our weakness, freely forgives our sin and does not condemn us. This is our strength and joy in the midst of the process of maturing in love. [John 15:11]

## Conclusion

- A. **Mature love is intentionally cultivated, not accidentally acquired.** How do we grow in love
  - a. Seek out truth in the Word. Truth is not casually found, but found in diligent pursuit. God is the rewarder of those who seek Him diligently. [Heb 11:6]
  - b. Pursue encounters with His heart and truth in the place of prayer. Take what the word says and pursue the reality of it touching your heart in prayer. Ask Him to make it more than information but revelation
  - c. Believe beyond circumstance: many people only believe God’s love and affection for them in good times. Our faith and trust for His love must go beyond our condition.
  - d. Abide in the love and truth of God
  - e. Ask for more insight and revelation of His heart and love. The love that goes beyond knowledge.