

Reading: John 15v9-17

Theme: Love so amazing, so Divine!

We have looked at v1-8 of John 15. Today we begin looking at v9-17. These sections do not just follow on the one from the other, but are interconnected. Both sections speak of “*abiding*”, “*remaining*”, “*continuing*” and in the 1st section it is in the Vine, in the 2nd section it is in Jesus’ love. Both sections have fruitfulness as the goal of the disciples (v5 & 16) and both link such fruitfulness to prayer (v7 & 16). Here in v9-17, Jesus further develops some of the themes introduced in v1-8, but the imagery, the pictures are dropped and a more expansive view or explanation of these things are given. This morning I want us to consider v9-11 using 3 headings:

1. The greatness of Jesus’ love.

In this section Jesus does not emphasize remaining in the Vine or in Him, but in His love. Here we are confronted with the love of the Lord Jesus for the disciples and ones such as us. This is a big, big subject - the love of the Lord Jesus for people like us. If we go through a hymn book, we will see the love of Jesus mentioned for us in many hymns and songs “*O the deep, deep love of Jesus*”; “*Loved with everlasting love*”; “*O the love that salvation’s plan*”; “*Loved before the dawn of time*” are some to mention. We read Bible verses like “*the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20); “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) or John 3:16.

We can see and learn much of the love that reaches out to fallen humanity in the plans and purposes of God which resulted in the plan of salvation, look at all it involved at such cost to the Son. We can see it, hold it up as marvellous, wonderful, glorious and

rightly tell all to see what manner of love the Father has lavished on us in saving sinful people of dust, feeble and frail as we are.

If we were to do that here in these verses, we could almost be guilty of blasphemy - taking God's Name and Being in vain by belittling Him. The Lord Jesus does not take us to Calvary and that glorious demonstration, manifestation and revelation of His love. He takes us to a far more exalted, glorious, wondrous and infinite expression of love - the love of the Father for the Son. We see v9 begins with that, then continues as a comparison of Jesus' love for us as His people. This amazingly is to be the basis in v12 of the pattern for our love to each other! Here we are not to limit the love of Christ to His self-sacrificing love for us. His love is far greater than that and if I can give us a glimpse of the enormity of that love towards us, I will be a happy.

What is the love of the Father for the Son like? What is the extent of such love? Obviously, there can be no limitation, no fault in the Father or the Son to hinder such love; nothing to prevent its perfect enjoyment and fulfilment. The Father and Son are perfect and have a perfect, infinite love and delight the one in the other. It is an eternal, complete, full, flowing and delighted love. As the Father contemplated the Son in eternity, so the love ever flowed, enveloped, enfolded Him and His being. The love of the Father has its delight and satisfaction in the perfect Son of God and has done so in all eternity and it is truly an everlasting love.

I have to own that I for one have difficulty here. I'm amazed at the love of Christ for sinners such as you and me, but to understand something of the eternal love of the Father for the eternal Son is beyond me and the little I am able to grasp, I'm

not sure if I know how to adequately explain its depth, height, length, breadth and its intensity!

The Father loves the Son - loves Him as totally God; loves Him as His Beloved Son, the express image of His deity and glory, loves Him as Lord of all Creation, loves Him as the Mediator of the new covenant, loves Him as the Saviour of mankind, as the obedient Son, the suffering Son and as the steward of His Father's love to mankind.

Here in v9 we begin to glimpse a bit of the magnitude, the extent, the greatness, the enormity of this love and the framework in which we are to consider this love. The greatness is not primarily revealed to us in our salvation, but in the love of God the Father, known, delighted in and experienced by God the Son in His glorious Being and Person. It is the love of contented pleasure and delight which the Father has for and in the Son.

Incredibly this is the same pattern and extent of the same love with which the Lord Jesus loves us. We recognise this in a wonderful way when we see that *“God demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). An old Welsh hymn says *“Here is love, vast as the ocean, lovingkindness as the flood, when the Prince of life, our ransom, shed for us His precious blood. Who His love will not remember? Who can cease to sing His praise? He can never be forgotten throughout heaven's eternal days.”*

Yet that is not the view of the love of the Lord Jesus we are to consider here. Yes, it is a part, a most wonderful, glorious and essential part, but Jesus' love doesn't start, end or stop there. His love for us this morning is as full and awesome as the love

of the Father for Him. It is incredible that with all our ups and downs, our failings, our cold thoughts of Him, the Lord Jesus loves us at this moment with the intensity of the love the Father has for Him!

Does that startle or move us? It should do! If we are a Christian this morning, then yes, we are sinners saved by grace - marvellous, wonderful, but we are His people, His children and He loves us as those who are now reconciled, righteous, eternally His, part of His bride and body. Romans 5:8 doesn't end the chapter, but v9-10 follow and Paul says "*how much more*" twice and actually says "*how much more*" 4, even 5 times by v21.

Please, do not get me wrong. I boast, delight in the death of Christ and all it achieved for us, all the riches of salvation we have begins there and we are saved and brought into a glorious love relationship with the Lord Jesus. All the legal barriers have been removed and we have and can enjoy this wondrous relationship with God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet we so often fail to realise this. We go to God with cold hearts, our prayers are heavy and lethargic, His word dry and barren - for often we fail to realise we are loved in such a way. We do not realise He views us as lovely, attractive, He desires our company, our words are precious to Him, He desires to bless us even more than we do to be blessed. He has given us His Spirit and we have great privileges in Christ. We are viewed as His precious ones and, believe it or not, our Saviour delights to view us, own us as His. We can pray for one another to know the fullness of His love (Ephesians 3:17-19).

In heaven, we will not be loved or rejoiced over one bit more that we are now. Yet then, we will realise and delight in marvelling in such, but we will not be loved one bit more **than we are now**, but realise such, enjoy such and wonder at such. I find those thoughts amazing. We cannot form any adequate idea of the love of the Father for the Son and neither can we, while on earth, fully grasp the extent of the Son's love of and for us – but let's know and enjoy it as much as we are able in our lives and then show it to others in our lives.

2. The claims of such love.

The Lord Jesus commands we continue, remain in His love and we are to do that by practical obedience to His commands, for He claims our loving obedience as we continue, to remain in Jesus' love. If we are His child, a believer in Christ, His love is always ours and ever toward us. We are to remain in His love, meaning we are to actively delight in, rest in an awareness of His love to us. We are to be ever influenced and affected by it, to find our delight in such love, in such thinking of and contemplations of this love to us, to see its evidence in our lives. Yet it is to work out as practical obedience as proof that His love moves us, directs us and motivates us in our lives.

To remain in Christ and His love is a conscious and deliberate resolution and attempt to go on in Christian things. It is a realisation of the love of Christ to us and we are determined to serve, know and delight in Him at all times. John Calvin wrote *“Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone which are not softened by such incomparable sweetness of divine love.”*

As we know this love, we will love Him because He first loved us. Then loving Him, we will live to please Him and do so by obeying His commands. We will do nothing to disturb Him, to

drive Him away from us, to hinder the joy of His company or presence, nor to grieve Him. Realistically we know that we will never do this perfectly, but our motivations, aims, desires are to Him, showing our love in practical holiness of both inner and outward life.

JC Ryle says that practical obedience to Christ's laws is "*the good secret of happy and comfortable religion*" and that "*this is one of the grand principles of experimental Christianity. Holy living and assurance of an interest in Christ are closely connected. Our own happiness and enjoyment of religion are inseparately bound up with our daily practical living. He that expects assurance, while he neglects Christ's commandments, is expecting what he will never get.*" If we love Christ because we know His love, then we will take every occasion to show it by living in a right way for Him.

The Lord Jesus responded in obedience to His Father – yes, the Father had a perfect love for Him too, but it did not excuse the Lord Jesus from obedience while in the days of His flesh, even when that love and obedience would take Him to the cross with all its horrors.

We are to abide, remain, continue in this love and show we do so by our obedience - as if He bids us go and promises His smile and favour as we do so. The amazing love of the Lord Jesus makes claims on us, but as such love is known, we see those claims are reasonable! A further incentive is seen in:

3. The outworking of this love.

The Lord Jesus fulfilled His Father's will completely and remained, abided, conscious in His love - even when forsaken by the Father under His just wrath on our sin, the Son was still

His beloved Son, was still was loved by the Father. Yet Jesus endured the cross, despised the shame. Why? It was for the joy that was set before Him. His joy as the Saviour, the Redeemer, the One to save His people from their sins; the joy of the Victor after the battle, the joy of the One who would have a rich harvest for His labours and pain; the joy of the Conqueror crowned and recognised as such; the joy of His Father's approbation (approval, praise, esteem); the joy of His work completed and eternally secure. The Lord Jesus has an eternal glorious joy as our Saviour.

To us who love Him, who would obey Him and remain in His love, He gives us a further encouragement - should we need any! He tells us that we will be partakers with Him in this joy and our joy in Him will be complete (v11). This is the joy of the Saviour who is loved by His Father, whose obedience and work are approved by His Father, who has entered into the perfect fullness of heaven and He wants us to know and to enjoy, delight in that joy.

Now Jesus has given us His love, He wants us to remain in His love and have His joy. Why then do we feel the Christian life is a hard one? Maybe it's because we fail to realise our true blessings by failing to recognise these truths in His word, not taking them on board as truly ours and failing to work out our love by obedience and remaining in Him and knowing His joy.

We are to realise that true holiness and happiness are married together and are not exclusive items. Legalism, the appearance of holiness, dead orthodoxy or orthodoxy for its own sake is joyless. Yet Christian living in loving obedience and delighting in the Saviour is blessed with the joy of the Saviour. This joy is not a silly glib, trite joy, but a solid joy that is little affected by

this world - it's applause or reproaches. It is a joy the Saviour has Himself, for He knows He is the object of the Father's love; we are to rejoice for we are loved by the Saviour with such love. By abiding in Him, we will realise more of this love with a sweeter clearness as time goes by and our joy, the joy of the Lord in us will increase.

The joy of believers here on earth is a joy that can and is to know increase and development. Sometimes we will know great increases, other times it will be a slow and gradual increases. Yet our aim is not to be joy, or peace, but to remain in Jesus' love by our obedience.

Our Lord shares His joy as we share His obedience - obedience prompted by love - He first loved us and was obedient to His Father - who He loved and who loved Him. This joy is to be a growing, and increasing joy, until that day we shall have fullness of joy in His presence forevermore - knowing His love and we loving Him with rejoicing hearts.

In our hard times, even in these Covid-19 confusing times, I pray we will realise that *"the joy of the Lord is our strength."* (Nehemiah 8:10). Even in our hard times, as we dwell on, think on the love of the Lord Jesus to us, all He has done, is doing and will do, I pray we would have an assurance that He is ours, have sweet outpourings and the fragrance of His love to us and such things will cause us to have solid joy, lasting treasure and we will continue on in serving, obeying and loving Him more.