

# Love - John 13:33-35, 14:15-31, 15:9-17

Wednesday, March 07, 2012  
5:35 AM

## Passages to Read:

- I John 3:11-4:21
- Corinthians 13

## I. Introduction

### a. Sermon Introduction

- i. Love is one of the only 'main' words in the Bible that our culture has totally imbibed
  1. Everywhere you go, you will hear about love
  2. But, our culture has destroyed the meaning of love, often making it mean 100% the opposite of what it actually means
- ii. Love IS one of the 'main' words of the Bible, though, and here in John 13-17, Christ emphasizes it strongly
- iii. So, this morning, we are going to discuss this one word, 'Love', and what Christ teaches about it in John 13-17

### b. Passage Introduction

- i. For the past five weeks we've been in John 13-17 - which is one discussion (or possibly two, closely related discussions) that Christ has with His disciples during the night before His crucifixion
- ii. We're going topically through the discussion, because Christ repeats several topics several times throughout the passage
  1. So far we've looked at:
    - a) Washing and Betrayal
    - b) The Going of Christ
    - c) The Coming of Christ
    - d) Abiding in Christ
    - e) Trinity and Unity
  2. We still have two topics left
    - a) Love (we'll look at this today)
    - b) The World
  3. For love, we will focus on three passages in John 13-17

### c. Passage

- John 13:33-35
- John 14:15-31
- John 15:9-17

### d. Proposition and Outline

**Proposition:** The core of Trinitarian unity is love; therefore we must reflect this love by imitating Christ's love.

**Outline:** (4 questions that will guide our discussion this morning)

1. What is love? (The Definition of Love)
2. Who loves? (The Source of Love and The Command to Love)
3. Why love? (The Reason for Love)
4. How do we love? (The Way to Love)

## II. What is Love? (The Definition)

- Personal - the commands of John 14 (and Romans 8) were integral to my 'conversion' and my understanding of the Lordship of Christ - something I pray for every morning - something I have a hard time understanding (not very emotional) - so I have meditated on these in depth over time

### a. A definition is hard to give - almost always talk about attributes of love, not definitions

- i. I Corinthians 13 - a long list of love's attributes
- ii. John 14 - a focus on one of love's attributes (obedience)
- iii. So, love can be described by its attributes
  - 1) But, personally, this doesn't help me much
  - 2) I want to love as Scripture says and I want to exhibit the attributes of love
  - 3) But what attitude/emotion is it that produces these attributes?

### b. Actual definitions of love in the Scriptures are nearly incomprehensible (that is the definition is so transcendent as to be impossible to understand how to implement it)

- i. God is love (**I John 4:8, 16**)
- ii. This leaves us with an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal definition of love - a great definition, but without more discussion of how practical use

### c. Love is understood in Christ (**I John 4:9**)

- i. Love is expressed in the Trinitarian relationships (thus God is love)
- ii. Christ reveals who God is to us and Christ manifests God's love to us
- iii. Therefore we see the 'love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:39)

### d. Love is:

- i. A joyful desire for covenantal faithfulness (Psalm 26:3, **57:10**, 108:4)
  - 1) Love is the desire to willingly and lavishly fulfill the covenant that we have entered into, or, alternatively, the desire to act rightly in a relationship
    - This is not a definition we will find directly in the Bible
      - But I want to look at several examples of love and show how this definition fits all of them
  - a) Thus, regarding God, love is the desire to act in accordance with His covenant promises
    - i) Love is why God keeps His gracious covenant promises
    - ii) His 'steadfast love' (see above verses)
  - b) Thus regarding Christ, love is the heart of obedience
    - i) John 14, **II John 6**
    - ii) Love is an emotion that desires to obey willingly and fully
    - iii) Note, love is the heart of obedience (the desire to obey) - if we defined love=obedience this leads to legalism
      - It is not, "I obey, therefore I love;" it is, "I love, therefore I obey."
      - There is a way in which the first is true (I obey, therefore I love)
      - But it is the difference between definition (the second) and diagnosis (the first)
        - Love causes obedience
        - Obedience diagnoses love
        - Switching the two leads to legalism

- c) Thus, regarding a man and a wife, love is a desire of, enjoyment of, and delight in each other's presence
    - i) Song of Solomon (read 6:4-13)
    - ii) Again, this is the right way to act in this relationship, so the desire to act in this way is love
  - d) Thus, regarding a man for his wife, love is a desire to see her washed and mature in Christ
    - i) Ephesians 5:25-33
    - ii) Again, this is the right way to act in this relationship, as the spiritual head of the home, the husband ought to work for his wife's sanctification, so the desire to act in this way is love
  - e) Thus, the attributes of love are all ways we ought to act in relationship with anyone
    - i) I Corinthians 13 - patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not arrogant, not rude, not insisting on it's own way, not rejoicing in wrongdoing, rejoicing in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things
    - ii) These are all ways to act in a relationship, so the desire to act these ways is love
  - f) Thus, love can be defined as the fulfillment of the law
    - i) **Romans 13:8-10**
    - ii) The law describes how we ought to act in relation to God and man
    - iii) If love is the desire to act rightly in relationship, then love is the fulfillment of the law
- ii. An emotion that does not fail to lead to action (**I John 3:18**)
- 1) Like I said in the introduction, the world has often used and misrepresented the word love
    - a) Often, they find in it nothing more than a fleeting emotion
  - 2) In response, many Christians have decided that love is not an emotion, but an action or a choice
    - a) They find in this a means for commanding the descriptions in the Bible (obedience, etc.)
  - 3) But, I want to state that love is an emotion, but not the emotion the world ascribes to it
    - a) It is a powerful, godly emotion that does not fail to lead to action
    - b) It is the desire to enjoy our spouses presence that causes us to delight in our spouse
    - c) It is the desire to willingly and lavishly fulfill a covenant that causes us to fulfill the covenant above and beyond what is necessary
    - d) It is the desire to obey willingly and fully that causes us to obey
  - 4) The emotion is a joyful desire to fulfill the covenant, the action is fulfilling the covenant
- iii. Christ demonstrates this heart attitude perfectly in every way, thus He does truly reveal it to us
- 1) Christ desired to obey His Father
  - 2) Christ loves His people like a husband ought to love a wife
  - 3) Christ demonstrates God's incomprehensible desire to be faithful to His covenant above and beyond what is expected

### III. Who loves? (The Source and The Command)

**a. We see three people loving and three people receiving love in John 13-17**

- i. The Father
  - 1) Loves Christ (**15:9**)
  - 2) Loves Christ's people (**14:21, 15:10**)
- ii. Christ
  - 1) Loves the Father (**14:31**)
  - 2) Loves His people (**14:21, 15:9**)
- iii. Believers must
  - 1) Love Christ (**14:15, 21, 23-24**)
  - 2) Love Christ's people (**13:34-35, 15:12, 17**)

**b. The first four relationships will become important below when we discuss, "How do we love?"**

- i. These four relationships form the basis or the source of love

**c. The last is the command that we are looking at this morning**

- i. We must love Christ
- ii. We must love Christ's people

## IV. Why Love? (The Reason)

- Above and beyond the simple command (it is commanded, therefore we must do it)
- Actually looking at two commands here, so we'll look at two sets of reasons

### a. Why love Christ?

- i. Because He first loved us (**I John 4:10**)
  - 1) This encompasses so much
    - a) Because He and the Father chose us before time apart from our merits
    - b) Because He laid down His life in our stead
    - c) Because He has revealed and opened up a way to the Father
    - d) Because He has promised us an inheritance
    - e) Because He has brought about our adoption as sons and daughters
    - f) Because He has chosen us (the church) as His bride and has pledged Himself to us as our Bridegroom
    - g) Etc. Etc.
  - 2) So, we love Him because He first loved us, and we have seen and experienced this love in innumerable ways
- ii. Because He is infinitely lovely (**Psalms 45**, first half (notice second half's implications))
  - 1) Christ, by His very nature, is intrinsically worthy of love
  - 2) Therefore, just knowing and meditating on who Christ is ought to prompt love

### b. Why love the brethren?

- i. Because Christ loves them and we love Christ (**13:34**)
- ii. Because love is a witness to the world (**13:35**)

## V. How do we Love (The Way)

- There are two people that we are commanded to love in this passage
  - We must love Christ
  - We must love fellow believers
  - We'll see how to love each in the points below
    - Some points deal with both
    - Some points deal only with one

### a. We love Christ and fellow believers (BOTH) by imitating Christ

- i. All love is first an imitation of the Trinity
  - 1) Notice the introduction to the second round of 'love' in **John 14:20** - an imitation of the Trinity
  - 2) Notice that the Father loves Christ (a Trinitarian relationship) SO Christ loves us (**15:9**)
  - 3) Notice that Christ loves and obeys His Father (a Trinitarian relationship) SO we love and obey Christ (**14:31** cf 14:15, 21, 23-24)
  - 4) Conclusion: The Trinity is where love originates and where love is perfected, any real love is a reflection of the loving Unity of the Trinity
- ii. We understand Trinitarian love through Christ, so love is, second, an imitation specifically of Christ
  - 1) Christ loves His people SO we love Christ's people (**13:34, 14:12**)
  - 2) Christ laid down His life in love SO we also lay down our lives in love (**15:13**)
- iii. So, understanding love is understanding Christ (or more importantly, understanding Christ is understanding love)
  - 1) I John 4:8, 16 - God is love (Trinitarian love is the normative)
  - 2) John 1:18, I John 4:9 - Christ has made God known (Christ reveals Trinitarian love)
  - 3) Knowing Christ is knowing love, understanding how to love
- iv. So, we love by imitating Christ
  - 1) We love Christ by imitating Christ's love for His Father
  - 2) We love fellow believers by imitating Christ's love for them

### b. We love Christ by desiring to obey Christ as Christ desired to obey His Father

- i. Wraps around to the first point
  - 1) Love necessitates obedience
  - 2) Love is not perfectly synonymous with obedience
  - 3) But loving Christ does perfectly necessitate obedience of Christ
    - a) Obedience of Christ is the ultimate way of relating correctly to Christ
    - b) So love, the desire to relate correctly, requires obedience
  - 4) So, where love is, obedience will always be
  - 5) Where true obedience is, there love always is
    - a) In other words, if there is 'obedience' without love (or obedience without the desire to obey) - this is not love
- ii. This is the most repeated point of Christ throughout the passage
  - 1) 14:15 - If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
  - 2) 14:21 - Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.
  - 3) 14:23 - If anyone loves me, he will keep my word
  - 4) 14:31 - I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.
- iii. Therefore, we can diagnose love by a true desire to obey, if we desire in our hearts to obey Christ, then we love Christ

### c. We love fellow believers by serving them as Christ did

- i. Christ commands us emphatically to love our fellow believers
  - 1) 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another
  - 2) 15:12 - "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
  - 3) So, we must recognize that we are in a covenant relationship with our fellow believers
    - a) We are together the body of Christ
    - b) We reflect this covenant relationship even in our membership covenant
      - i) I hereby enter into the following membership covenant...As a follower of Jesus Christ, I joyfully and thoughtfully enter into a bond of mutual edification,<sup>1</sup> fellowship,<sup>2</sup> and accountability<sup>3</sup> with the other members of this body. I have repented of my sin,<sup>4</sup> trusted in Christ as my Savior and Lord,<sup>5</sup> and been baptized in accordance with His command.<sup>6</sup>
      - ii) We have tried to detail this covenantal relationship as well as possible according to Scripture in our membership covenant
  - 4) So, to love our fellow believers, especially the members of our church means we will desire to lavishly fulfill the stipulations of this covenant
- ii. Christ tells us to love our fellow believers by imitating Him
  - 1) How do we imitate Christ? Let's look at ways Christ loves His people:
  - 2) Serving the brethren (13:14)
  - 3) Giving our life for brethren (15:13, Ephesians 5:2, I John 3:16-18)
    - a) What does this mean?
    - b) It means that nothing in this life should be so sacred that we would not give it up to serve one of the brethren, up to and including our lives
    - c) A radical, others centered approach
  - 4) Praying for the brethren (John 17, Luke 21:31-32)
  - 5) Having an attitude of humility that considers others better than ourselves and looks out for others' interests (Philippians 2:3-11)
  - 6) Forgiving each other (Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 18:23-35)
  - 7) Seeking other's sanctification (Ephesians 5:25-28)
    - a) This doesn't mean seeking to judge each other
    - b) This means a desire to see other's enjoy the blessings of Christ as much as possible
  - 8) Building each other up in Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16)
  - 9) Bowing to one another's consciences (Romans 14:13-23)
    - a) This means that we can give up many freedoms to serve a brother or sister in Christ
    - b) This means we do not stand on our rights, especially when a brother's or sister's conscience is troubled
  - 10) Only a partial list - but a good sample

### d. We can only truly love if we believe

- i. I Timothy 1:5 - love flows from faith
- ii. Galatians 5:6 - faith is worked out through love
- iii. Ephesians 3:14-19 - faith is prerequisite to love

## VI. Conclusion

- a. What is love? A desire to willingly and lavishly fulfill our covenantal commitments.
- b. Who loves? The Father loves Christ and Christ's people. Christ loves the Father and His people. Believers must love Christ and love the brethren.
- c. Why love? We love Christ because He first loved us and because He is infinitely lovely. We love the brethren because Christ loves the brethren and because it is a witness to a watching world.
- d. How do we love? We love by imitating Christ. Therefore, we love Christ as Christ loves His Father and walks in obedience before Him. We love Christ's people as Christ loves His people.