

- PRAYER -

I've been in Christian ministry for 36 years and after getting pretty far into people lives for close to 4 decades, I have come to the conclusion that most Christians live their lives with the feeling that they are a disappointment to God.

Like a child who shows his report card to his parent who expected an **A** but only see a **C** (and their head drops in disappointment), or like the dad who responds with disappointment when his child takes a shot at a wide open net, and completely misses in that important playoff game.

"I'm a disappointment to God—I'm sure he wishes he had someone else as a son or daughter".

I think many Christians relate to God like that—that's how they think God views them—wishing he could trade them for someone better.

We have a very hard time believing what the Bible says about God's attitude towards us, because it just seems too unbelievable to be true.

Today I want to **remind you** what the Bible says on this matter, & I want to call you to **believe it**—and even **build your life** on it.

Please open your Bibles to the gospel of John—**John 15:9-12 [PP# 1]**

These verses surprise us on many levels. Just about every verse in this text challenges our **assumptions** and **preconceptions about God** and how he relates to us.

We know that the greatest commandments have to do with love. But if you're careful, you'll notice that the emphasis is different in these verses.

It moves toward our love of others in **verse 12**, but that is the result of something else—something even more **essential** and **basic**. Do you see what I'm referring to? Jesus begins the discussion in **verse 9** with the way the Father loves the Son.

A well known quote from A.W. Tozer says:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us" **A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy**

Is the love of the Father for the Son one of the first things you think about when you think about God? For most believers it's not—and **I want to try to change that today**.

These verses are about an absolutely amazing **overflow**—the overflow of the Father's love for the Son...and the Son's love for us... and then our love for others.

In other words,

Those Most Loved are Most Loving and Happy [PP#2]

The discussion begins with an invitation:

1. The Invitation (vs 9) [PP#3]

Look with me at **verse 9**. Something astounding is revealed to us. This should take our breath away. It should shock us. If it doesn't we haven't truly understood what we've read.

Jesus is making a direct comparison between the way God the Father has loved him, and the way he loves us.

Now—this couldn't refer to the way God has loved the Son in eternity as God. The way an infinite person loves another infinite person is beyond comparison and not replicated in finite creatures.

God the Father loves the son with perfect delight by seeing the perfect reflection of himself in him—God delights in perfection and sees that perfection in his Son.

So, if this verse is not referring to the eternal love of God the Father for God the Son—**then what is it referring to?**

The love spoken about here refers to the love the Father has for his Son **as he lived as a man**—as he lived as our representative on earth.

When Jesus walked the earth 2000 years ago, he was showing us what **God had intended humanity to be like from the start**—he is called **the last Adam** in Scripture. He was demonstrating the life of obedience to the Father that the first Adam failed to do.

So as a perfect human being, perfectly obedient to his will— the Father loves Christ. He has loved his Son forever **in eternity**...and now he is loving him **in time** as the incarnate Son.

[PP# 4]

“As his own Son in our nature, the Fathers affection went out to him as the Son of man; and just as a human father on beholding the cordial and constant obedience of his own child feels his own affection thereby irresistibly drawn out to him, so every beauty of the Son's incarnate character and every act of His obedience, rendered him more lovely in the Fathers eye and drew fresh love to him” **David Brown, The Four Gospels, P. 441**

I like the way the NLT expresses this:

[PP# 5]

A voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." **Matthew 3:17 (NLT)**

This love is characterized by **delight in the one loved** and a **desire to do good for the one loved**.

Our text says that Christ loves us that way—with the same kind of delight & desire to do good to us.

To abide in Christ's love is to **live in the good** of it. Instead of living with the foreboding sense we are a disappointment to God, we instead live with the sense of his welcome, acceptance, and delight in us.

Jesus is inviting every believer in Christ to this kind of life—to abide—to live continually with a sense of Christ's love for us.

To be able to, with the apostle Paul, say with full confidence:

[PP# 6]

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**

Now the question is—**How does a believer in Christ abide in Christ's love?** Because it obvious that most Christians are not living this way. Most Christians don't live with a sense of God's favor and love over them.

This takes us to our next point—**the condition required** in order to abide in Christ's love.

2. The Condition (vs 10,12) [PP#7]

Now notice that the way to keep in Christ's love is again patterned on the way Christ abides in the Father's love.

Remember—we are talking about the way the Son relates to the Father **as a man**. In what way did Christ live in obedience to his Father? In one sense we could accurately say—in everything!

So Jesus says:

I always do what pleases him. **John 8:29**

But in the New Testament, when it speaks of Christ's obedience, it usually is referring to his giving of himself to die for us on the cross.

[PP#8]

When Christ came into the world, he said: ... "I have come to do your will, my God." **Hebrews 10:7**

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. **John 6:38**

[PP#9]

*Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming **obedient** to the point of death, even death on a cross.* **Philippians 2:8**

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life. **John 10:17**

The first Adam disobeyed God & plunged humanity into alienation from God and the loss of God Himself. The second Adam—Jesus Christ—obeyed the Father perfectly & lived near to God by abiding in his love. **He demonstrates what God had originally intended for humanity.**

In **verse 10**—Jesus says that, **in the same way**, we abide in Christ's love for us—is by keeping his commands.

Then in **verse 12** he further defines this—**we love others in the way he loved us**. So the way we abide in his love is by loving others in a **certain way**—the way he loved us.

And how exactly did he love us?

[PP# 10]

*Christ **loved us** and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **Ephesians 5:2***

He loved us by sacrificing himself for us—by putting our interests before his own—and dying in our place!

*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. **1John 3:16***

What does this look like practically? Let me suggest 4 ways that we can express this:

[PP# 11]

1. We love others without expecting a payback

*But **love** your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. **Luke 6:35***

[PP# 12]

2. We love others in a self-forgetful way—without seeking recognition, respect, or gratitude for what we've done.

*Be devoted to one another in **love**. Honor one another above yourselves.*

Romans 12:10

[PP# 13]

3. We reach out to people outside our “comfort zone” (family & friends)

If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?
Matthew 5:47 (NLT)

[PP# 14]

4. We bear the burdens of others

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **Galatians 6:2**

Weep with those who weep. **Romans 12:15**

[PP# 15]

Perhaps we can better understand how this works if I illustrate it this way

There is a circular cause and effect relationship being described here.

[PP# 16,17,18 - 2 seconds each]

As we obey Christ—particularly his command to love others sacrificially—as we deliberately love others in a way that costs us something—we will at the same time live in the enjoyment of Christ’s love for us.

So what does this mean then for the many Christians that don’t live with a sense of being loved by Christ? **Verse 10** tells us that it’s not just a lack of faith in what Christ says—its a lack of obedience to what Christ says.

We love ourselves a bit too much, and love others a bit too little.

Those are hard words to hear aren't they? This passage comforts the afflicted, but it also afflicts the comfortable.

[PP# 19,20,21 - 2 seconds each]

Which comes first? The enjoyment of Christ's love to us, or the expression of our love to Christ?

It's much like asking which comes first—the chicken or the egg?

They both produce the other. The child born becomes the mother who gives birth to the child, who then becomes the mother and gives birth to the child.

The key issue here is this simple truth—**our enjoyment of God is connected to our obedience to Him.**

And here's the surprise in all of this. Look at what we get when we pour out our life in love to others....

2. The Outcome (vs 11) [PP# 22]

We are given joy. Do you see the sequence here? Christ gives us his love & Christ gives us his joy. It doesn't say that Christ gives us joy. It says he gives us **HIS JOY**.

The joy that Christ had through the power of the Holy Spirit as a man.

[PP# 23]

Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit. Luke 10:21

The joy that bears hard things because it sees the good fruit on the other side:

[PP# 24]

Looking to Jesus...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.... **Hebrews 12:2**

This is something the Holy Spirit gives us as we obey Christ:

[PP# 25]

The kingdom of God is a matter of joy in the Holy Spirit. **Romans 14:17**

God cares about our happiness, but wants our happiness to be from the right source & directed to the right ends. Did you know that this is one of the goals of pastoral ministry? The pastors of this church are **working for your joy**:

[PP# 26]

We work with you for your joy.... **2Corinthians 1:24**

I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.
Philippians 1:25

What is often missed about the pursuit of happiness is that it is not primarily found in getting more but in giving more, not in taking care of ourselves, but in taking care of others. In a word—the shortest pathway to joy is **a life of holiness**—for a holy life is a loving life.

Sometimes people think we are killing their chances of happiness by following Gods commands (too restrictive)...but actually the opposite is true. It's in loving others that we enjoy Christ's love and that is the secret key to true joy.

So let me **sum up** what we have learned today:

[PP# 27]

1. Being a Christian is not just affirmation of a set of beliefs. It is a loving relationship with the person of Christ.

[PP# 28]

2. The key to the Christian life is living in the comfort of knowing we are deeply loved by God. It is not our love for God or others that is the key, but Gods love for us—known, experienced, and enjoyed!

[PP# 29]

3. The shortest pathway to happiness is obedience to Christ, for it is the pathway to knowing we are loved by God.

[PP# 30]

4. The way we love others reveals more about our actual relationship to God than any other thing about us.