

## 1. The Love of a Parent Admonishes for the Flourishing of the Child

## a. Love as a Father to His Children

- i. Our culture vacillates in its view of love between sentimental emotionalism and eroticism
  1. When applied to God, it makes God into a cuddly grandfather with all the moral integrity of a marshmallow
    - a. God would never judge anyone, at least not eternally
    - b. God wants me to be happy...and this makes me happy, therefore *if God is loving, then He wouldn't tell me "no"*
    - c. This is most pervasively apparent the more that we feel or experience deep innermost desires
  2. When applied to the Church, it becomes *niceness*, where love is measured by whether or not someone is nice
    - a. Whatever Christians should be, the world says, they should be nice, where being nice means smiling a lot and never telling anybody that they may be wrong about anything (that isn't nice)
    - b. In the local church it means abandoning church discipline (which isn't nice, it makes people feel bad about themselves) and refusing to "be divisive" about this thing called "doctrine"
- ii. Love is, therefore, equated with affirmation and approval of whatever it is that the lovee *wants or desires*
  1. To reprove, exhort, discipline, or demand is, therefore, seen as unloving and thus hypocritical
  2. Nobody wants to be hypocritical, so Christians learn to "play nice" and hunker down into the private sphere of our own little world and resolve to nicer
  3. In accepting, tacitly or otherwise, this definition of love, we have become like the world rather than speaking the prophetic hope of the gospel with an electrifying, holy, just love from God and to one another with all its moral demands
- iii. When we listen to God's revelation of Himself rather than the wisdom of the world, however, we see that love is much more complex than mere niceness
  1. There are degrees or variations to love dependent upon the relationship between the Lover and the Loved, which are revealed by God in His Word
    - a. Love of God the Father to God the Son (John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31)
      - i. Intra-trinitarian love
      - ii. It is non-redeeming (no need) and not merciful (no need), eternal (no beginning), and complete (perfectly lovable)
    - b. God's Providential Love of His Creation
      - i. God made the Universe and called it "very good" (Gen 1:31)
      - ii. He causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall on everyone, righteous and unrighteous (Matt 5:45), sending fruit and harvests to satisfy your heart with good things (Acts 14:17)
      - iii. In fact, loving our enemies is based upon this very truth that God loves the righteous and the unrighteous in this way (Matt 5:46)
    - c. God's Inviting Love
      - i. God loves the world enough to reveal Himself to all and call all people to repent and trust in Him (John 3:16)
      - ii. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11)
      - iii. This is the love of the God who reveals Himself, but is different than the love of the Father to the Son

d. God's Electing Love

- i. He chose Israel for a uniquely redemptive and revelatory relationship, not because she was greater or stronger or wiser, but because He loved her (Deut 7:7-8; 10:15)
- ii. This love makes distinctions of relationship, blessing, and promises (covenant) between one and another.
  1. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I have hated" (Mal 1:2-3)
  2. This is not say that God was disgusted with Esau, but rather that Jacob was chosen for a unique and blessed relationship which Esau was not
  3. This relationship was chosen by God before Jacob or Esau "were born or done anything good or bad." (Rom 9:10-12)
- iii. Thus, God chose the church "before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in His sight" (Eph 2:4); this was "according to the purpose of His will" and is "to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph 2:5-6)
  1. This is different than God's providential love, or His inviting love
  2. It is effectual, regenerating, and faith-granting love
  3. It is this love which sent the Son into the world for the sake of redemption through His death

e. God's Conditional Love

- i. Yes, *conditional*
- ii. We are commanded to "keep ourselves in the love of God" (Jude 1:21), implying that we can act in ways that move us outside this aspect of God's love and so invoke discipline
- iii. Jesus said, "If you keep my commands, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and abide in His love." (John 15:10)
  1. There is a sense in which we move outside of love and into wrath, walking in a manner which is pleasing to God (Col 1:10) or displeasing to God.
  2. Like when my son screams and hits me with his jacket, he has not moved outside of my electing love (he is still my son), but he has moved outside my conditional love and is under my wrath (there will be discipline for his good)
  3. For what son does the Lord love whom he does not discipline for the son's good? (Heb 12:6-13)

b. Love Admonishes for the Flourishing of its Beloved

- i. Therefore, a father's love for his children is an admonishing, warning, correcting love
  1. This love will bring discomfort *for the sake of the beloved*, to warn them of a danger which they do not foresee nor appreciate
  2. "Human love here offers a true analogy: the more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him the drunkard, the liar, the traitor." – E.H. Gifford
  3. "The fact is... anger isn't the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference." - Rebecca Pippert, *Hope Has its Reasons*

2. How do we deal, then, *lovingly* with heterodoxy and heteropraxy in the Church?

- a. *Heterodoxy*: "differing *kind* of faith"

- i. Opposed to orthodoxy – “straight belief” – consistent with the Truth of God’s revealed Word
- ii. Paul was correcting this “realized eschatology” with sound doctrine, Truth, by comparing it to the doctrine of the Cross
- b. *Heteropraxy*: “differing *kind* of behavior”
  - i. Opposed to orthopraxy – “straight behavior” – consistent with the Truth of God’s revealed Word, i.e. the gospel of His Son
  - ii. Paul was correcting this opposition to weakness and the consequent arrogance and triumphalism by comparing it to how Christ walked and he walked
- c. Confront these with firm biblical grounds of Truth, rooted in the Cross of Christ
  - i. There was a small set of people who were "puffed up" in opposition to Paul
    - 1. Thus, though there were party factions, it is more than that, for these one were apparently very anti-Paul
      - a. He reminds them of his integrity (he practices what he preaches) and that Timothy will remind them of this
      - b. He reminds them, again, the he is their father “through the gospel and in Christ”
        - i. Christ is their authority, and His gospel is the standard
        - ii. It is not Paul, but Christ, not Paul but the gospel which is to root any and all admonishment necessary
    - 2. They are not outsiders, but come from within the church its community
      - a. Often, the call to non-accountability and resistance to admonition and correction comes from within the Church
      - b. This group questioned Paul’s commitment and love for the Church, and was possibly questioning his integrity
        - i. Often, opponents to correction will build a straw man which moves the argument from the issue needing correction to an attack on the heart and intentions of the admonisher
        - ii. Therefore, he promises to come to them (it was apparently questioned whether he cared enough to visit or was trustworthy to keep his word)
  - ii. Paul has been clearly delineating the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of Man, the power of God and the power of Man, the Triumph of God and the triumph of Man – all differentiated at the Cross of Christ
    - 1. Cheap grace, the allowing and acceptance of sin within the midst of the Church, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is “is the preaching of forgiveness with requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” (*The Cost of Discipleship*)
- iii. You speak truthfully, with warning *and with hope*
  - 1. “Do you want me to come with a rod of discipline (wrath), or with a spirit of gentleness?”
  - 2. Like the warning given to a child, “When your father comes home...”
    - a. Every father would rather come home with gentleness and play, with joy and with lightheartedness to see their children walking rightly
    - b. No father wants to come home knowing that he must bring discipline with him, heaviness of heart, sorrow because his children are in danger of becoming self-centered brats and idolatrous monsters

3. The Spirit of God Transforms Our Affections With Power – Proof of Kingdom Citizenship
  - a. There is a distinction between "speech" (logos) and "power" which describes the Kingdom of God
    - i. Paul reminds them that when he preached the gospel to them, it was not effective because of its flourish, but because the Spirit brought conviction and illumination of the Truth
    - ii. "demonstration of the Spirit and power, not in eloquent words of wisdom, so that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God." (2:4-5)
  - b. The Spirit must *prove* the Truth of the gospel to the hearts of man
    - i. We seek to persuade hearts, to move men to action, but the *certainty* that the gospel is True comes only from the Holy Spirit – and this *certainty of conviction* is His power
    - ii. "Demonstration" here means "to prove" – Paul knew that His words weren't even able to make the gospel "plausible" to anyone! Only God convinces men.
    - iii. The change of heart that sees the folly of the cross as the wisdom of God is a complete miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.
  - c. This proof of the Spirit's power is that heart of the believer is so convinced
    - i. that his sin necessitated the crucifixion of the Son of God, so he is deeply humbled (confession and repentance are the inhale of his life)
    - ii. that Christ's death and resurrection is sufficient for his sin that he is deeply hopeful, encouraged, and rejoices at the grace of God towards him (joy, prayer, and praise are the exhale of his life)
    - iii. This inhale and exhale of gospel life fills the soul with the power of God, *the desire and the empowerment to walk according to His commands*
      1. Col 1:10-12
      2. Worthy of the Lord
      3. Pleasing to God
      4. Bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God
      5. Gratitude to God for His glorious grace
  - d. Paul trusted in "Christ crucified" as the means of Spirit to bring conviction, conversion, sanctification, and transformation of life.
    - i. That is, the Cross of Christ is the evidence and proclamation of the weakness and foolishness of man, but the power of God - and this is the power to effect glory and holiness.
    - ii. Paul throws down the gauntlet to show that man-dependent works don't effect real and lasting heart transformation.
      1. The Law reveals the neediness and wickedness of the heart, but it cannot change or transform the heart
      2. Only the Spirit of God can do that
        - a. So, ask Him to do it.

God empowers His children to know Him, transforming our affections as we behold His Son – so ask Him! If you have failed, He is full of mercy, and He accepts you on the basis of the blood of Christ, not your perfection. Therefore, come near again by that same blood, in grateful worship of the God whose love for you runs so deep that He gave His Son for you. He is your loving Father, so don't despair over his discipline, but let it work its purpose to draw you back into walking in a manner worthy of the calling of holy which you have been given, in a manner pleasing to Him, which fills Him with joy at the delight of His children walking in the way in which you were made to walk, growing in the knowledge of God together with other saints, filled up to all the fullness of God.