



THE VINE & the Branches

Part 7: The Relationship
Between Abiding & Obedience

Introduction

As we near the end of Jesus' teaching on the *Vine & the Branches*, we already sense that we have been in the presence of Greatness. Who has ever spoken with such authority? Who but the Incarnate Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, could claim the invisible God as His Father and make Him known to the world? Who but the Creator of the whole world could have such infinite knowledge of vineyards and employ the various parts of the whole as metaphorical vehicles, combined into a seamless allegory, to make eternal salvation and intimacy with God so perfectly clear? Who but One who was in constant fellowship with the Father could have used such beautiful language to lead His children into the utter joy of His presence.

Introduction

In some sense, we may say that we are already full. We have tasted His Word, have seen that it is good, and believe it to be a true reflection of the eternal realities which will impact our well-being in this life and in the one to come. Our hearts have been comforted as we have embraced the faithful promises He made to all who will follow His directive: *Abide*.

If we were completely honest at this point, we might be tempted to ask a few more questions: “What more can be said about this allegory?” “Haven’t we examined the major points of His teaching?” “Is there really anything to add to what Jesus has already taught us?”

Introduction

The answer is, “Yes, there is more.” He has not yet exhausted all that He wanted the disciples to understand on the night of His arrest. His teaching does not end with verse 8. There is more the disciples will need as they take up their roles as Apostles and set out to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. With them, we must lean in and not become weary over the fact that we have heard the words branches, vine, vinedresser, cleansing, lifting up, abide, not abide, and fruit, many times during our days together. He has more to say to us to ensure that we will be able to remain intimately at home in the Father’s love. His final words will complete the allegory and provide everything we need for living *coram Deo* (before the face of God).

John 15:9-10

- “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 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” (NASV).
- “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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” (ESV).
- “I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commandments, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done – kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love” (*Message*).

God is Love

“The mystery of the Trinity in love, is one about which we can hope to understand only the tiniest hints and guesses of the infinite, blinding light of truth that is there.”



Peter Kreeft

1937 -

Professor of Philosophy, Boston College

The Father Loves the Son

- **“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you”** (John 15:9).
- “Just as” is translated from the Greek from a word indicating comparison. It can be translated using the following definitions: “as, just as, in so far as, to the degree that.” Christ’s love for His disciples was exactly like the Father’s love for His Son. Christ loved His own to the same degree that His Father loved Him.
- This leads us to ask, “What can we know from Scripture about the Father’s love for His Son?”

The Father's Love For His Son

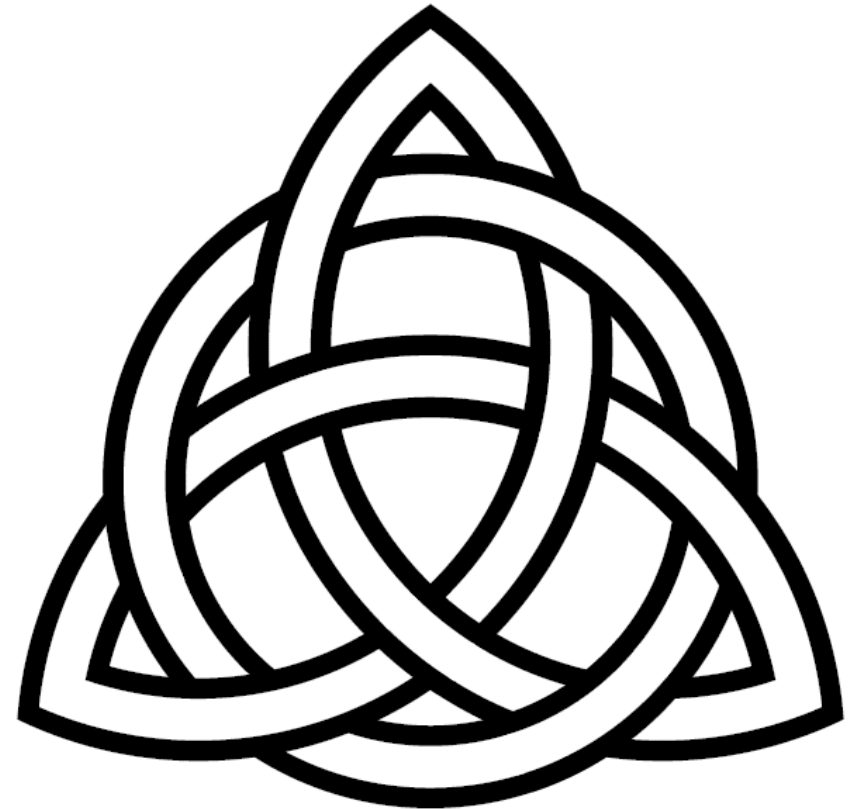
- **At the baptism of Jesus:** “...and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is **My beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased’” (Mt. 3:17).
- **At the Transfiguration:** “While he (Peter) was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud over-shadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is **My beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased; hear Him!’” (Mt. 17:5).
- “For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is **My beloved Son** with whom I am well pleased,’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (II Peter 1:17-18).

The Father's Love For His Son

- “Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou has given Me; for **Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world**” (John 17:24).
- “...the love wherewith **Thou didst love Me** may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).
- “**The Father loves the Son**, and has given all things into His hand” (John 3:35).
- “For this reason **the Father loves Me**, because I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:17).

How the Father Loves the Son

- With an infinite love
- With a supremely inconceivable love
- With an unconditional love
- With a holy love
- With an inexhaustible love
- With a perfect love
- With an immutable love
- Freely, decisively, and personally



Amazing Love

- **Infinite:** having no limit or end; boundless, unlimited, endless
- **Inconceivable:** unthinkable, unimaginable, incredible, incalculable
- **Unconditional:** not limited by or subject to conditions or stipulations; absolute
- **Holy:** infinite moral perfection
- **Inexhaustible:** incapable of being exhausted, consumed, or spent
- **Perfect:** supreme moral or spiritual excellence or virtue; righteous, holy; spiritually pure or blameless
- **Immutable:** not subject to or susceptible of change; unchangeable, unalterable



Amazing Love

- **Freely:** without compulsion or constraint
- **Decisively:** unhesitatingly
- **Personally:** through one's personal presence
- “We don't really believe God likes us. Sure, we believe God loves us in a theological sense, but we don't feel particularly liked by Him. We're convinced that He remembers all the bad things we've done in the past and is quick to judge how we're doing now....If we really abided in His love, we would come away feeling so nourished, so cherished, so liked, that we would rush back to Him whenever we could”
(Wilkinson).

Seeing the Analogy

- Returning to John 15:9, we can now see more deeply into the meaning of Jesus' words to His disciples, **"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you."**
- This can only mean that Christ's love for us is infinite, supremely inconceivable, unconditional, holy, inexhaustible, perfect, immutable, free, decisive, and personal.
- "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His **great love with which He loved us**, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7).

The Father Loves Us

- “See **how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us**, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are” (I John 3:1).
- “And we have come to know and have believed **the love which God has for us**. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (I John 4:16).



C.S. Lewis

“God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. He creates the universe, already foreseeing – or should we say ‘seeing’? there are no tenses in God – the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the mesial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake, hitched up. If I may dare the biological image, God is a ‘host’ who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and ‘take advantage of’ Him. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.”

“If You Keep My Commandments...”



Dan Allender

Professor of Counseling Psychology
The Seattle School of Theology & Psychology

“Love is derailed when our heart is turned against God. The direction of the heart is either one of love, gratitude, and worship or its opposite, hatred and self-justification for sin and adoration of the self. The dilemma is that hatred of God is rarely obvious or articulate. More often than not, our anger toward God is suppressed, denied, and redefined.”

Refusing To Abide

- *Abide* is in the imperative; it is a command. To abide, then, means we have to act – to do something in response to the one giving the order.
- Jesus has already told the disciples, “I love you.” Now they must exert themselves to abide in that love. They cannot be passive recipients; they must actively engage.
- If we refuse to abide, we are refusing to know the love of God and to have the life of Christ flow through us - and we dry up and die.
- When we fail to remain in His love, we do not produce any spiritual fruit and realize this deeply within ourselves. What follows is a sense of emptiness and uselessness – even in the midst of material success.

Keeping God's Commandments

- “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (I John 5:3).
- “And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments” (II John 6).
- “Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10).
- “He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:21).
- There is only one true God and His law is the expression of His unchanging nature and righteousness.

Keeping God's Commandments

- “And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but **whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected**” (1 John 2:3-5a).
- In John's passage, Jesus teaches that the one who constantly keeps His commandments shows that he constantly loves Him.
- Our obedience is the answer to the Father's initiating love; His love makes us eager to keep Christ's precepts.
- The manifestation of Christ's love to the believer is by the Word and Spirit.

Grace & Law

- God requires one total, unchanging, and unqualified obedience.
- The purpose of grace is not to set aside the law but to fulfill the law and to enable man to keep the law.
- The expression, 'dead to the law,' has reference to the believer in relationship to the finished work of Christ as the believer's representative and substitute.
- The believer is dead to the law as an indictment but is alive to the law as the righteousness of God. We are restored to a position of law-keeping.
- We grow in grace as we grow in law-keeping.
- Lawless Christianity is a contradiction in terms: it is anti-Christian.

Love So Amazing, So Divine!

“The arms of the Savior on the cross reach up to the Absolute and down to the depths of the human heart and across the whole universe from atoms to archangels. When Jesus threw open his arms on the Cross, he said, in effect: “See? That’s how much I love you.”

- Dr. Peter Kreeft

