

God's Beloved

by T. Austin-Sparks

God's love for man is the central theme of this sermon, and the believer's union with God in Christ is the ultimate goal of God's love.

Scripture: Romans 8:38, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 1:6, Ephesians 3:18, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 1:27, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Gods Love", "Union With Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks preaches about God's great love for us, emphasizing that behind all of God's dealings with humanity is His heart of love. From the creation of man to the chosen nation of Israel, the Bible progressively unveils God's eternal, mysterious love, culminating in the embodiment of His love in Jesus Christ. The focus shifts to the Church as the beloved of God, purchased with His own blood, and the Apostle Paul's ministry richly reveals the depths of God's love. The sermon delves into the believer's union with God in the Beloved, emphasizing the organic and vital relationship that mirrors Christ's relationship with the Father.

Transcript

"...but God, being rich in mercy, for HIS GREAT LOVE wherewith he loved us..."

In our previous meditation, we were seeking to point out that, although this whole vast universe has behind it a mind, a reason, a design, a plan, a will, a fiat, yet back of all that there is a heart, and that means love. We sought first to see that the very creation of man was dedicated by the heart of God for purposes of His own love, and then that the whole Bible is a progressive and growing unveiling of that fact. It is God's love for man that lies behind all His dealings with man. We traced that fact from Adam, through the chosen seed, particularly citing the case of Abraham, and then of the chosen nation, Israel. How full, wonderful, altogether inexplicable, was the love of God! We went on into the New Testament and pointed out how that eternal, mighty, mysterious love of God became fully embodied in the person of His Son, 'Who lived His life, did His work, gave Himself, all on the basis of love for the Father and that the Father might have in man that upon which His heart has ever been set. We dwelt at some length upon His love for God His Father, and we marked it also in connection with His disciples, whom, having loved, He loved unto the end; and we saw at what infinite cost to Himself all was at length accomplished, all in the strength of that love.

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH IN THE BELOVED

Passing from the days of His flesh over into the next part of the Bible, beginning with the book of the Acts and running on to the book of the Revelation, we have the love of God from eternity as now seen to be centered, in the first instance, in something called "the Church": "the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Christ... loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). It is quite impossible for us in a brief time, to go right through all that section of the New Testament, but I think we shall be agreed that this unveiling is brought to us, not exclusively but in its fullest and richest form, in the ministry of the Apostle Paul, who himself was a wonderful embodiment of God's love. It was the one note deepest in his own heart, breaking out from time to time in nothing short of utter amazement. He "loved me, and gave himself up for me"! (Gal.2:20). "O the depth of the riches..." (Rom. 11:33); they are the riches not only of wisdom and knowledge but also of His love. And this man, who could never understand why that eternal love should light upon him and single him out, has given us such a marvellously full, deep, rich revelation of that love. We are just helpless and hopeless when we try to cope with this revelation through and in Paul. We can only do the best the Lord enables us to do in thinking about it and bringing it to the notice of others.

We remember, as we pointed out in our previous meditation, that, when the Son of God's love stepped out into His great public ministry at Jordan, the Father's word from heaven was - "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17) "My beloved Son." You will recall what we said about that little prefix- "BE-loved"; not just "My loved Son," but "My beloved Son," that is, one to whom I am utterly given. Now this Apostle of the eternal love of God - with what would be frightful audacity were it not the whole doctrine of the love of God - dares to use that same phrase of the believer, "hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6. A.V.). "Us in the beloved"; God giving Himself to us in the same way as He gave Himself to His Son. Oh, I do hope you do not just take that as a kind of play upon words, a little touch of interest, when I stay to underline the beginning of the word "beloved." I pointed out that it is the beginning of many words and every one of them has to do with a complete thing. If it is "BEtrothed," that is the complete giving. If it is "BEseech," that is something more than asking. When I come to you concerning something with which my life is wrapped up, something which is of very great importance, I do not just simply and casually ask you about that matter; my whole being goes out to you; I beseech. God is very particular about that, and He very often heads us up to something more than easy asking - to beseeching; not because He is reluctant or unwilling, but because He wants us to get right into the matter. It is of paramount importance. "I beseech," said Paul - that was how he approached men. "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). It is a life and death matter. Or take "BEsiege." If you are going to besiege anyone or anything or any place, you do not just walk up to them or it. You give yourself to that thing, you are all in on that matter. That is where God is over His Christ - the Beloved; and that is transferred to us.

CHOSEN IN THE BELOVED

Here, in this letter to the Ephesians, right at the beginning everything is put on that basis. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love" (1:4). An alternative rendering to that is, "He chose us in love before the foundation of the world that we should be holy." "Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption." (This is the R.V. reading of Eph. 1:5,6). It is all in the Beloved, in the BE-loved. Do you catch the emphasis? It is not just that He chose us, or that He chose us for this or that. It is WHERE He chose us. Nor is it just that He chose us in Jesus Christ: He chose us IN

THE BELOVED, giving the character and the quality of the basis of our relationship to God. That being so, our very existence in relation to God is a love existence, a love relationship. It is what Christ's relationship was to the Father that is ours; and you know how in the New Testament this very word 'beloved' is frequently used concerning believers. (Note: Let it be clearly understood that nothing said here or elsewhere means that the unique and exclusive nature of Christ as "the only begotten of the Father," the eternal Son, is infringed or overlooked. The peculiar nature of the Person of Christ is preserved and jealously preserved. We are here dealing with our calling in Christ.) Paul was tremendously fond of using it. Here he says it inclusively - "in the Beloved," but again and again he will say to the saints, "beloved of God." That is not just a pleasant thing said. We can use that language to one another, we can address people in those terms; but Paul was not just saying a nice thing, calling them beloved of God to make them feel comfortable.

For him, the whole doctrine of grace was wrapped up in that. He comprehended the eternities past and future in that; "in the Beloved," "beloved of God." If you think that is just language and words, do remember that Paul's horizon, his whole world, beyond which for him there was nothing, was what he so frequently called "in Christ." You have little need that I remind you of the way in which Paul used that phrase. I have managed to find 128 occasions in Paul's writings alone in which he uses that phrase, or what corresponds to it. "He chose us in him." "In whom we have our redemption." Now you go on and see all that he has to say about "in Christ." It is in the Beloved.

UNION WITH GOD IN THE BELOVED

Now, what does that mean? As I see it, it means that the sum of Paul's ministry, which was the outflow of his own life and experience and understanding, was and is UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST, and that, LIVING union, ORGANIC union. I would have to take you back to the Old Testament again to indicate how much that was so in the terms used. We saw in our previous meditation the terms used by God concerning Israel, calling Israel His child, His son, His daughter, His betrothed, His wife. All these are organic, vital conceptions. It is not the relationship of one brick to another in a building, inanimate, cold, however closely connected. It is the throbbing life of a love union, so strong and deep that Paul will cry in one of those inexpressible utterances of his "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35). Then he tabulates and catalogues all the things that do effect separations - life and death, things present, things to come, and all the rest, and he says, But none of these "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The union is so much a part of Himself that it would be dividing God and dividing His Son.

I am not stepping over now to the obligations and responsibilities of this love where we are concerned, but at once you will glimpse something when I quote that passage from Corinthians- "Is Christ divided?" That is only one way of saying, that you cannot divide Christ, you cannot make Christ into parts without destroying His very Person. So this love makes for such a oneness with God, of an organic and vital character, that to separate would be to destroy an organism. Oh, that we had a right conception, God's conception, of the Church and of relatedness! What a tremendous statement that is - "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life," nor this and that and that (tremendous things) "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38,39). What a pity it is that the chapters should have been broken there (Romans 8 and 9). We need to read on to get the full force of it. But we must not be too detailed now.

Paul's whole conception and unfolding of the purpose of God from eternity is in this little phrase - "in Christ," "in the Beloved." Here, in the letter to the Ephesians, you have the summary of it all. He goes right back before ever we were formed, and before ever this world existed in its present order - before the recreative activity of God. It was back there God chose us in the Beloved. Looking right down through all the ages, He chose us in Him.

CALLED INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BELOVED

Then Paul passes from the eternal choice of love and speaks about our being called into the fellowship of God's Son. Chosen, now called. I wonder what weight you give to your salvation, your conversion, your coming to the Lord, however you may put it? Is it no more than just that one day you met the Lord Jesus, one day you were saved, one day you came to the Lord? Have you recognized that was the day of a call, concerning something related to you and to which you were related, which goes right back before time? It is as though God in eternity past chose you in love, and then called you according to His purpose. He had to wait until you were here to actually call you; and the call came; but that call was wrapped up in something vast, and the vast thing was union with God Himself in His Son in the terms of eternal love.

What is God after? And when He gets what He is after, what will things be like? We talk about the testimony of Jesus. We have a lot to say about the fullness of Christ, of the Church which is His Body, of identification with Christ. All these are great truths, great conceptions. But what I find is this, that we have not come to an end of God's thoughts yet. I am very glad of this; but it is the most painful thing we can know, that we never come to an end here, and in order to go on a further stage something has to happen to us that knocks the bottom clean out of all that has gone before. That is to say, we go through a new experience of death and desolation and emptiness, of hopelessness, in order to come to something further on in the Divine revelation. We thought, "Oh, now we have come into the fullness of God's thought! Now at length we are seeing what God is after!" We get on with that for a time and it fills our whole vision; and then everything is as though it were nothing, and we go through a terrible time. Oh, yes, it was right, it was true, but it was not God's end. My experience is that it is through just such a history with God, of repeated desolations and emptyings and despairings after wonderful unveilings and times when you feel there cannot be anything more, that you are brought up again into something further on, with your vision enlarged. I do not know whether we have come to the last point of God's movements, but what I am saying now is this, that when God gets His end, everything will be only, but absolutely, a manifestation of His love.

I think that is what Paul means here in the letter to the Ephesians, for this is a wonderful revelation. But look at the place of grace in this letter, look at the place of love. "...the breadth and length and depth and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," (Eph. 3:18,19). That is the object. Paul holds it up into view, that we may come to that in the end.

Well then, if you and I are going on to God's end, what will characterize us? This one thing - abounding more and more in love. I state that and leave it for the time being.

ALL-SUFFICIENT PROVISION IN THE BELOVED

He called us, but, blessed be God, His calling of us is on to and into a perfectly prepared ground, to an all-sufficient provision. It is in Christ. What a terrible thing it would be if He called us with so great a calling, and we had somehow to attain to it of ourselves and to find all that is required for attaining. Why, it were better that we had never been called! We know how utterly impossible it is for us to provide the smallest

degree of anything that can attain to God's end. Can you find in yourself this love of God, this kind of love? Why, we have only to read one section of this whole revelation to find ourselves defeated at every point. I refer to 1 Cor. 13. There is not a fragment of a sentence there that does not knock us to the ground. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil. " And to sum up all - "Love never faileth"; that is, love never gives up. Where are we? Can you stand up to that? No! But He called us in the Beloved, and in Christ is a perfectly prepared ground. "In whom I am well pleased" - an all-sufficient provision.

That causes Paul to go out along one wonderful line, and he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). (Paul is not saying that when we died in Christ we lost our individuality. We ought to have lost our individualism, but not our individuality.) There is some difficulty in translating the verse just quoted. "I live by the faith of the Son of God," or "which is in the Son of God." It seems to me that, in keeping with so much more that Paul says, it means this - "It is Christ Who is providing what is necessary for this new life [on] the other side of the Cross. I live by Him, I live by the provision that He makes." Yes, and God, in calling us into His Son, has called us into an all-sufficient provision. You say, "I cannot love, especially in certain directions." But Christ can, and He has proved it in your case. Do you think everybody loves you? There are some people who do not love you, but Christ loves you whatever you are. You might be unloved for very good reasons by everybody else; He loves you, God loves you now with that love that can and does love the unlovely. He can provide us with a love to love.

Is not this the wonder of the whole evangel? Have we not many times heard missionaries who have come home saying, "When I was called of God to go to such and such a country and people, they were the very people I felt I could never love; everything about them stirred up in me only bad feelings; but I have come to love them, they are my people." Well, that is simple enough. My point is that to be called into Christ is to be called into a provision for what that very word "beloved" means. You have the great example of Paul and the Corinthians. If ever a people deserved the opposite of love from a man, those Corinthians deserved it from Paul. They owed everything to him, and they treated him, to say the least of it, most shabbily, so that he could say that the more he loved them, the less they loved him (2 Cor. 12:15). When you read about them your uppermost feeling is that it requires a great deal to love these people. Yet what is Paul's attitude? His heart is going out in brokenness over them. This is love that is not natural; it is in Christ, it is the provision in the Beloved. Do you catch the thought? I need not labour it. In Christ is an all-sufficient provision.

Well, Paul has many aspects to this great reality of "in Christ." As you know, he says that God put us all into Christ in the Cross. When Christ died and was judged of God, in Him we, too, were judged and death passed upon us all. We are in Him also risen; and not only so, for we are not just left here on this earth as risen: we are in Him seated in the heavenlies. How many aspects of this "in Christ" matter there are! What does it amount to? It amounts to this, that only Christ is the sphere of the believer, and in Christ that great heart intention of God in the creation is realized - a people in the Beloved, beloved of God, the objects of that love, and who should be filled (the Lord forgive us for our failure!) with that same love of God. It is in that sphere of Christ that God proceeds with His love purpose.

CONFORMITY TO THE BELOVED

What is God doing with us in Christ? Inclusively, He is seeking to conform us to the image of His Son in terms of love. What is your idea of the image of God's Son? He is the Son of His love, and the very word "Son" is a love term, than which there is no higher and fuller, and in the revelation of God, Son, Sonship, is the embodiment and exhaustion of love. "Conformed to the image of his Son" in terms of love. I am putting something on you and on myself when I say these things, but there it is. You must ask the Lord to write the force of this in your heart and do not just take it as an address. The Lord will have to help us after this, for there will have to be some very real dealings with Him. We are going to be challenged and found out on this. It is well that we are very much occupied with the word "grace." "Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be." We love that word. Do we realize that is only the other word for love, and that it speaks of the initiative of God in this whole matter? In grace He chose us. The initiative of God was in love.

Then what is true of our position in the Beloved is put upon us as our obligation, and when we are bidden to love one another we are bidden to show to others the grace that God has shown to us. In 1 John 4:19 there is a fragment which is so often quoted - or misquoted when it is quoted from the Authorized Version - "We love him, because he first loved us." It is a misquotation because the "him" should not be there, and to put it in really does not make sense with the context. "We love, because he first loved us." That is the whole of John's argument in that letter. "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). "God so loved"; He gave the all that He in heaven possessed. We therefore love one another, because He loved us first.

That is a tremendous test of the reality of our being "in Christ," and a tremendous challenge, and we need something with which to meet and answer that challenge. Paul says that provision is all in the Beloved. That does not get us close enough. It is not as though the beloved Christ is a kind of sphere and God has put everything inside there. It is Himself. "It is no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ is the supplier. Oh, how much Paul dwells upon that! Right through to the end, to the ultimate realization - "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). If there is anything beyond what I have said, it might be summed up in that word "glory". "...hath called us unto his eternal glory" (1 Peter 5:10). But what is the glory? There is no glory except the glory of perfected love. Perfected love is the glory of God. The glory of God is His love.

Well, if you forget all that has been said, do get the impression upon your heart of the one thing "His great love wherewith he loved us." This whole matter of a Christian's life is gathered into that. That love in us is the satisfying answer to the heart of God. It is not how much truth and doctrine we possess, how much teaching we have or give; it is not a matter of the mysteries of the Gospel; it all resolves itself into this - the love of God shown to us and then shown by us; that is all. The Lord help us!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/gods-beloved/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net