

Andrew Murray:

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: abide ye in my love."--John 15:9.

Blessed Lord, enlighten our eyes to see aright the glory of this wondrous word. Open to our meditation the secret chamber of THY LOVE, that our souls may enter in, and find there their everlasting dwelling-place. How else shall we know aught of a love that passeth knowledge?

Before the Saviour speaks the word that invites us to abide in His love, He first tells us what that love is. What He says of it must give force to His invitation, and make the thought of not accepting it an impossibility: "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you!"

"As the Father hath loved me." How shall we be able to form right conceptions of this love? Lord, teach us. God is love. Love is His very being. Love is not an attribute, but the very essence of His nature, the centre round which all His glorious attributes gather. It was because He was love that He was the Father, and that there was a Son. Love needs an object to whom it can give itself away, in whom it can lose itself, with whom it can make itself one. Because God is love, there must be a Father and a Son. The love of the Father to the Son is that divine passion with which He delights in the Son, and speaks, "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The divine love is as a burning fire; in all its intensity and infinity it has but one object and but one joy, and that is the onlybegotten Son. When we gather together all the attributes of God-His infinity, His perfection, His immensity, His majesty, His omnipotence-and consider them but as the rays of the glory of His love, we still fail in forming any conception of what that love must be. It is a love that passeth knowledge.

And yet this love of God to His Son must serve, O my soul, as the glass in which you are to learn how Jesus loves you. As one of His redeemed ones, you are His delight, and all His desire is to you, with the longing of a love which is stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench. His heart yearns after you, seeking your fellowship and your love. Were it needed, He could die again to possess you. As the Father loved the Son, and could not live without Him, could not be God the blessed without Him-so Jesus loves you. His life is bound up in yours; you are to Him inexpressibly more indispensable and precious than you ever can know. You are one with Himself. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." What a love!

It is an eternal love. From before the foundation of the world-God's Word teaches us this-the purpose had been formed that Christ should be the Head of His Church, that He should have a body in which His glory could be set forth. In that eternity He loved and longed for those who had been given Him by the Father; and when He came and told His disciples that He loved them, it was indeed not with a love of earth and of time, but with the love of eternity. And it is with that same infinite love that His eye still rests upon each of us here seeking to abide in Him, and in each breathing of that love there is indeed the power of eternity. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

It is a perfect love. It gives all, and holds nothing back. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." And just so Jesus loves His own: all He has is theirs. When it was needed, He sacrificed His throne and crown for you: He did not count His own life and blood too dear to give for you. His righteousness, His Spirit, His glory, even His throne, all are yours. This love holds nothing, nothing back, but, in a manner which no human mind can fathom, makes you one with itself. O wondrous love! to love us even as the Father loved Him, and to offer us this love as our everyday dwelling.

It is a gentle and most tender love. As we think of the love of the Father to the Son, we see in the Son everything so infinitely worthy of that love. When we think of Christ's love to us, there is nothing but sin and unworthiness to meet the eye. And the question comes: How can that love within the bosom of the divine life and its perfections be compared to the love that rests on sinners? Can it indeed be the same love? Blessed be God, we know it is so. The nature of love is always one, however different the objects. Christ knows of no other law of love but that with which His Father loved Him. Our wretchedness only serves to call out more distinctly the beauty of love, such as could not be seen even in heaven. With the tenderest compassion He bows to our weakness, with patience inconceivable He bears with our slowness, with the gentlest loving-kindness He meets our fears and our follies. It is the love of the Father to the Son, beautified, glorified, in its condescension, in its exquisite adaptation to our needs.

And it is an unchangeable love. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." The promise with which it begins its work in the soul is this: "I shall not leave thee, until I have done that which I

have spoken to thee of." And just as our wretchedness was what first drew it to us, so the sin, with which it is so often grieved, and which may well cause us to fear and doubt, is but a new motive for it to hold to us all the more. And why? We can give no reason but this: "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you."

And now, does not this love suggest the motive, the measure, and the means of that surrender by which we yield ourselves wholly to abide in Him?

This love surely supplies a motive. Only look and see how this love stands and pleads and prays. Gaze, O gaze on the divine form, the eternal glory, the heavenly beauty, the tenderly pleading gentleness of the crucified love, as it stretches out its pierced hands and says, "Oh, wilt thou not abide with me? wilt thou not come and abide in me?" It points you up to the eternity of love whence it came to seek you. It points you to the Cross, and all it has borne to prove the reality of its affection, and to win you for itself. It reminds you of all it has promised to do for you, if you will but throw yourself unreservedly into its arms. It asks you whether, so far as you have come to dwell with it and taste its blessedness, it has not done well by you. And with a divine authority, mingled with such an inexpressible tenderness that one might almost think he heard the tone of reproach in it, it says, "Soul, as the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you: abide in my love." Surely there can be but one answer to such pleading: Lord Jesus Christ! here I am. Henceforth Thy love shall be the only home of my soul: in Thy love alone will I abide.

That love is not only the motive, but also the measure, of our surrender to abide in it. Love gives all, but asks all. It does so, not because it grudges us aught, but because without this it cannot get possession of us to fill us with itself. In the love of the Father and the Son, it was so. In the love of Jesus to us, it was so. In our entering into His love to abide there, it must be so too; our surrender to it must have no other measure than its surrender to us. O that we understood how the love that calls us has infinite riches and fulness of joy for us, and that what we give up for its sake will be rewarded a hundredfold in this life! Or rather, would that we understood that it is a LOVE with a height and a depth and a length and a breadth that passes knowledge! How all thought of sacrifice or surrender would pass away, and our souls be filled with wonder at the unspeakable privilege of being loved with such a love, of being allowed to come and abide in it for ever.

And if doubt again suggest the question: But is it possible, can I always abide in His love? listen how that love itself supplies the only means for the abiding in Him: It is faith in that love which will enable us to abide in it. If this love be indeed so divine, such an intense and burning passion, then surely I can depend on it to keep me and to hold me fast. Then surely all my unworthiness and feebleness can be no hindrance. If this love be indeed so divine, with infinite power at its command, I surely have a right to trust that it is stronger than my weakness; and that with its almighty arm it will clasp me to its bosom, and suffer me to go out no more. I see how this is the one thing my God requires of me. Treating me as a reasonable being endowed with the wondrous power of willing and choosing, He cannot force all this blessedness on me, but waits till I give the willing consent of the heart. And the token of this consent He has in His great kindness ordered faith to be—that faith by which utter sinfulness casts itself into the arms of love to be saved, and utter weakness to be kept and made strong. O Infinite Love! Love with which the Father loved the Son! Love with which the Son loves us! I can trust thee, I do trust thee. O keep me abiding in Thyself.