

The Abba Revealed in Christ
Delivered: 18 December 2022
Scriptures: John 17:23, Exodus 6:3

John 17.23 - “Father...You have loved them just as You have loved Me”

The exact same love that the Father has for His Beloved Son, the Father has for you.

Many of us hear that and we say “amen, yes, I know that when I confessed my sin and invited Jesus into my heart then God began to love me because of what Jesus did on the cross.” And what we don’t realize by thinking this is we just made God the judge before we believed who then changes into loving Father as a result of our sinners prayer.

The spirit of religion loves this because religion wants you to believe that if His love has a beginning then, therefore, it can have an end...so you better stay in line. Religion wants you to believe that God’s love is arbitrary, that it is dependent on you keeping your end of the bargain.

Question: Is that the same love that the Father has for the Son? At what point did the Father begin loving the Son?

Listen to what Jesus says next in **verse 24**:
“Father, You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

You see, the love of the Father predates everything...even your sinners prayer. That sinners prayer may have affirmed the love of the Father but it’s not responsible for it...

Paul writes in **Ephesians 1.3-4** - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing...just as He chose us (*when we got our act together*)...He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love.”

John 17 - He loved you before the foundation of the world
Ephesians 1 - He chose you before the foundation of the world

No amount of good works,
no amount of tithing,
no amount of fasting,
no amount of prayer,
no amount of repentance,

could ever earn the love of the Father because it's from before you had a chance to do any of those things!

Now don't hear what I'm not saying. Do we do good works (absolutely...we walk in the good works that were prepared beforehand - [Ephesians 2.10](#))...tithe...fast...pray...repent? Absolutely! But we do those things because we are loved, not to become loved. Those things are our response when we realize we are loved by a God who loved us before we had a chance to do anything to deserve love.

Your repentance doesn't earn the love of the Father because, the love of the Father predates the sin that made your repentance necessary. Did you hear that? His love predates the sin that made your repentance necessary. While we were ENEMIES we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ([Romans 5.10](#)).

Repentance brings us into agreement with who God says we are...Loved. "Repent" doesn't mean "STOP sinning!" We've all been taught that repent means to change the direction you are moving. And that's partially true.

-Repentance is first a changing the way you think at such a core level that it then changes the direction you're moving in.

-Repentance first and foremost is a renewing of the mind. Prove it.

The greek word for repentance is *metanoia*. Look in any Greek lexicon and the first definition for metanoia is "change of mind."

This is why John the Baptist could look at the Pharisees, who were blameless according to the law, and say to them "repent!" They knew the law, they were moving in the right direction according to the law, but they didn't know the God of the law.

If repentance is changing the way you think, then what is the first thought that must change?

Most of us came up in a religious system that taught us that we must understand that we are sinners. We must realize that we are separated from God by our sin. And this is true...our sin has separated us from God. But religion has taught us that it's our awareness of that sin that leads to repentance. There's only one problem with that...the Bible.

[Romans 2.4](#) - it's the "kindness of God that leads to repentance."

Repentance doesn't begin when I see myself as filthy...repentance begins when I see Him as kind.

These aren't just semantics...how something begins is massively important. The beginning determines the trajectory. If repentance begins with me and my sin when the Bible says repentance begins with Abba and His kindness, then my relationship with God has sin consciousness as it's origin instead of God consciousness. This is why we have such large portions of the church walking around thinking they are simply "snow-covered

ding” (Martin Luther), totally depraved and just sinners saved by grace. (William Carey - “Here lies a wretched, poor, and helpless worm.”)

God intends for repentance to wash over us when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes

- to see how beautiful God is
- to see Him high and lifted up
- when we actually see Him as He truly is, and we realize,
- “My God, You are not who I thought You were.”

Repentance begins with Him.

When you see Him as kind then you will see yourself as loved.

“**THIS** is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the exchange for our sins” (1 John 4.10)

He is kind, and His love for you:

- first, predates the sin that made your repentance necessary, and
- second, His love is not changed by your sin, because according to 1 Corinthians 13.8, “Love never fails.”

The word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13 that we translate “fail” is important to understand. The Greek word is *pipto*.

- Pipto* means to fall, to lose one’s way, to abandon.
- Other examples of *pipto* in the Scriptures are:
 - Luke 10.18** - “I saw satan fall (*pipto*) from heaven like lightning.”
 - Acts 15.16** - “After these things I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen (*pipto*)...”

Johnny’s love may have *pipto*-ed, and your dad’s love may have *pipto*-ed, but the love of your Heavenly Father never will.

The Father’s love for you never needs to be rebuilt because it never falls apart.

What can separate you from a love that never loses its way?

Religion wants you to believe that your sin can have the same effect on God’s love that the Babylonian army had on Solomon’s temple...that your disobedience tears down His love into ruins. And then it’s your faith and your good works that restore the ruins of His love.

The truth is this: God’s love bears all things, endures all things, is not provoked by anything, suffers long...and NEVER fails.

Am I saying that nothing changes when we sin?

“Shall we go on sinning so that grace may abound? God forbid!” (Romans 6.1)

Something very, very important changes as a result of sin.

But the right question we need to ask is not “what changes” but “who changes?”

If we go back to the very beginning of the story in Genesis 3, when Adam sinned, who changed? Did God change as a result of Adam’s sin? Before Adam ate the fruit, was God loving and a great Guy to be around and then all of the sudden He becomes the uptight judge?

Did God change as a result of Adam’s sin? Because Hebrews 13.8 says that:

“God is the same yesterday, today and forever”

He is unchanging in all of His ways.

In Malachi 3.6 God says, “I, the Lord, do not change.”

Adam’s sin didn’t change God...Adam’s sin changed Adam.

When Adam sinned something broke inside him. For the first time, Adam experienced fear and anxiety and shame...and he took those awful things and he projected them onto God...and in so doing, Adam created a mythological god, a god created in the image of his own brokenness. And now standing before this created god, Adam could only wonder “How is this new god, who I’ve never seen before, going to react to my nakedness?”

That was Adam’s response to his sin. But what was God’s response?

“Adam, where are you?”

God wasn’t asking the question because He didn’t know where Adam was.

God was asking the question because for the first time Adam didn’t know where Adam was.

While Adam was hiding in his sin, God came to Adam and covered his nakedness and shame. Sin didn’t change God. Sin changed Adam.

Hear this? Sin doesn’t have the power to change God. Sin changes us.

You and I inherited the fallen mind of Adam.

The fallen mind that perceives God the same way Adam did after he sinned.

The fallen mind of Adam interprets every move that God makes through the lens of brokenness. What God says is one thing, but what we believe is another.

So we read a verse like John 17:23 that is crystal clear about God’s love for us, and instead of hearing the Father say “I love you exactly the same as I love Jesus,” we hear “I love you when you’re doing more good stuff than bad stuff.”

That’s not the gospel.

The gospel is this; God loved you from before the foundation of the world, knowing good and well that you were going to blow it...but nothing was going to stand in the way of you experiencing His love. And Jesus wrapped Himself in flesh to judge sin and death once and for all...and to make sure you got the message. Mike Bickle puts it this way, "God's judgments are aimed at anything that interferes with love."

Does this mean we can just do whatever we want? Of course not. Like Paul says in **Romans 6:1**, "How shall we who have died to sin live any longer in it?"

God despises sin...He despises sin because of what it does to His children. Sin is a monster and a predator. And like all predators that prey on children, sin shatters purity and innocence. And like all children who have been abused by a predator, until there is true healing of the emotions and mind (repentance), anytime another authority figure tries to get close, the child reverts to the moment they were violated, they see this person as another predator, and out of protection, they respond in fear.

Sin has the same affect on God's children...it lies to us, breaks us, separates us from God, and sin shatters the image of who God really is. And that's not all, because sin is relentless...sin then demands that we see God through all of that brokenness.

And every time the Father tries to come close we respond in fear. "I wouldn't get too close...remember what He did to Jesus."

Most people in the world really like Jesus...but if they're honest, it's the God of the Old Testament that scares them. God doesn't have a split personality...God didn't get saved when Jesus died on the cross.

Jesus says in **John 14.9**, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

Jesus is exactly what God wants to say about Himself.

Hebrews 1.3 says that Jesus is the glory and substance of God, the embodiment of God wrapped in flesh.

The bible doesn't present 2 different versions of God...one to draw us in with His gentleness and sacrifice and the other to keep us in line with His black robe and gavel. If you think of God that way then that's evidence that you are seeing Him through the lens of Adam's brokenness and not through the renewed eyes of repentance.

Where was the Old Testament God, who Adam was afraid of, when Jesus was on the cross literally becoming sin?

Was He turning His back on the Son who was taking on the sin of the world because God can't look on sin?

Where was the Father when Jesus needed Him the most?

How you answer this question means EVERYTHING when you find yourself crying out to God in desperation, or when you're standing with someone else who is crying out to God.

Where was the Father when Jesus needed Him the most?

2 Corinthians 5.19, God was "in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." The Father did not forsake the Son, not even for a moment, just read **Psalm 22**...and because this is true you can know that He won't forsake you when you need Him the most.

Jesus says this in **John 16.32** about His disciples, all of you will forsake Me, "but I am NEVER alone, because the Father is with Me."

If religion can't keep you from Jesus it will settle for keeping you from the Father. Religion is determined to keep you from running in to Abba's lap, to make sure there is just enough of Adam's fear left in you to keep God at a safe distance... 'cause you saw what He did to His Son, right?

Religion wants you to believe that the Father turned His back on Jesus because God can't look on sin...and this way of thinking keeps entire denominations of believers afraid that if they mess up God will turn His back on them.

Where was God when Jesus was showing mercy to the woman caught in adultery? When Jesus was looking that woman square in the eye and saying "where are your accusers now" the God who religion says can't look on sin was in Christ reconciling that daughter to Himself.

Don't let religion tell you that He can't look on sin, that's a horrible interpretation of the question Habakuk is asking in **Habakuk 1.13**.

In the book of Habakuk, we see a man, under an inferior covenant, bringing his questions before the Lord because He was confused...he asks the Lord a series of questions and processes his confusion out loud. Habakuk says,

"I will watch to see what the Lord will say to me and how I will answer when I am corrected."

What's being corrected? Well, chapter 1 verse 13 is an example of Habakuk's confusion over who he thinks God is.

Habakuk says,

"Your eyes, O Lord, are too pure to look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal wickedly."

Habakuk doesn't understand how God could do what He is actually doing...looking on the wicked. So while Habakuk is asking a question, religion takes that question and turns it into a doctrine...a doctrine that has now become a golden calf in much of the church. God can not look on sin.

If He can't look on sin none of us would've gotten saved. The truth is His loving eyes of fire saw your sin and kept burning with passion anyway... because if He didn't find you when you were lost you never would've been found. 2x

Psalm 25.8 says that He "shows sinners the way."

Ephesians 2.4-6 says, "...Because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, He made us alive with Christ...and raised us up, and seated us in heavenly places"

Habakuk can't show me who the Father is, not the Father revealed in Christ, anyway.

Hebrews 10.1 says that the "law, the Old Covenant, was a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image itself." Habakuk was a minister during the shadow days, what he saw was a mere glimpse. And religion wants to keep you focused on the shadow. But Jesus came to show us the authentic substance. The shadow days are over...the Son has come!

John says in **John 1.18**, "No one has seen God at any time. But the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him."

How can John say "no one has seen God when:

in **Genesis 32.20** Jacob wrestles with God and says, "I saw God face to face and my life was preserved"

in **Exodus 24.9** Moses, Aaron, Aaron's 2 sons, and 70 elders went up the mountain and saw the God of Israel and the sea of glass under His feet

in **Judges 13.22** Samson's parents said "we shall surely die because we have seen God"

and of course there's Isaiah..."In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, high and lifted up."

Someone needs to tell John to re-think that whole "no one has seen God before' bit.

Yet here's John the beloved beginning his love letter by saying "guys, we thought our fathers had seen God, but actually what they saw was just a glimpse. And now that the Beloved Son has come from the presence of the Father...He has revealed the Father to us!

There is only One Man who can say "if you've seen Me you've seen the Father."
Moses saw a glimpse,

the prophets saw a glimpse,
King David saw a glimpse...

and we honor the contribution and the detail that these fathers of our faith have given the world...God revealed enough of Himself to guide His people to the moment in history when He would wrap Himself in flesh and show us Emanuel.

But now that the Son has fully revealed the exact expression and nature of the Father, I can't go to Job to find out who the Father is. There is one God, and only one Man sufficient to reveal Him...the God revealed in Christ.

The Father did not abandon His Son, and the Father did not viciously beat Him instead of you. I spent years worshipping Jesus for enduring that beating for me. But what was really happening at the cross is infinitely more beautiful.

And I understand that "by His stripes we are healed." But no where in the sacrificial system is there mention of beating the mess out of the lamb in order to produce blessing for God's people. It wasn't brutality that was necessary for salvation...it's the shedding of blood. Blood was required.

So when the Lamb of God was given over to wicked men so that blood could be shed, wicked men did wicked things.

I spent years worshipping Jesus for enduring the beating, the mocking, the shame, being brutalized and spit on for me. Did those things happen? Absolutely. But let me tell you what drives me to worship now:

not only did He endure all of those things for the joy set before Him, but on the cross Jesus entered in to Adam's deception about who His Father was yet refused to think like Adam.

He entered into my deception of who the Father is and refused to think like me. Jesus entered into the full depth of Adam's sin, which meant that He also took on Adam's "alienated mind" as [Colossians 1.21](#) puts it..."you were once alienated from God and enemies in your minds"...Jesus took on that alienated mind but refused to believe the lie about

who His Father was and
where His Father was in that moment and
what His Father was doing in that moment

That's redemption...Jesus became sin for us...the full measure of sin. He did not become a sinner...but at the cross He fully stepped into Adam's brokenness and by refusing to believe the lie about His Father He took away the power of that lie forever.

It's at this point that the religious skeptic points to Jesus saying "My God why have You forsaken Me" and stops there. But Jesus didn't stop there. Those weren't His last words. "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" is the glorious resolution.

Abba, we did it! Now give me the keys so I can't set captives free.

A.W. Tozer writes this in his book *The Radical Cross*, "We have not been redeemed by one person of the Trinity putting Himself against another, but by the three Persons of the Godhead working in glorious harmony."

This is the gospel. The same love that the Father has for the Son,
love that is from before the foundation of the world,
love that never fails,
love that never changes,
love that never abandons,
love that can not be earned

this same love is the love that the Father has for you...and if the world knew just how good He is then they would see how irresistible He is.

When people hear this for the first time there's something inside that says "this sounds too good to be true." Exactly. That's the gospel...if it's not too good to be true then it's not good enough.

Jesus took every bit of Adam's brokenness to the grave. Jesus came to judge sin and the devil once and for all for lying about who His Dad is. So now, praise Jesus forever, you and I can know Abba as He actually is and live in the love that He had for us from before the foundation of the world.