



Recently, in a fourth Sunday lesson from a General Conference talk, we studied D. Todd Christofferson's talk on the Savior called, "Abide in My Love." The link to the talk is at the bottom of this article. It really struck home, and I began to want to try to put into my own words the nature of God's love for me and my relationship to His love. One of the first points he makes in his talk comes from the following sentence.

"God's love is infinite and it will endure forever,

but what it means for each of us depends on how we respond to His love." I would like to talk about the love Jesus offers me, and what I need to do to benefit from that love.

First of all I need to clarify that when I refer to God's love it doesn't matter if I am referring to the Father or to the Son. God's love is perfect, whole, complete, and is the same in quality and quantity, steadfastness, and constancy regardless of the member of the Godhead. But in this article I am only referring to the love of the Father and the Son, recognizing that the Holy Ghost is not one whit behind the other two in His love for each of us.

Whose love do I seek?

The scriptures state that God is love (1 John 4:8). In the next verse we are told that God (the Father) sent Jesus to earth not because we loved him - his presence was not a reward for our love of God - but because He loved us. Jesus was sent to us in order to die for us. Our Father was willing to send His greatest child, His beloved Son in order that the required ransom might be paid that would permit the redemption of all the rest of His children.

Our disobedience to God's laws has cut us off from ever being able to return to His presence. Without a way to reconcile our sinful choices with His perfection we would be separated from our Father forever. Jesus paid the price required by God's laws to allow for a gift of mercy to be offered to the children of God. This mercy allows us to continue to make mistakes, but permits us, through repentance, to be forgiven of those mistakes and poor choices. As long as we obey the commandments given to us from Jesus, which

he received from our Father, Jesus will forgive us, based on our meeting his conditions of repentance. This will allow us to be able to return to our Father in Heaven one day.

God, our Father is merciful, but as the law giver He cannot directly forgive us for our disobedience. He must uphold and sustain the laws He has laid down for our benefit. Mercy must be earned by a third party, and can only be administered by someone who is not tainted by disobedience to the laws of God. This is where Christ comes in. He was innocent and free of any offense against God, yet was willing to suffer the full penalty of our disobedience to those same laws. Because of the love Jesus has for each of us he was willing to pay for our sins so he could, in turn, offer us mercy.

His mercy is what allows us the opportunity to repent. Without his atoning sacrifice in Gethsemane and on the cross we would have no way to repent and be forgiven. Here is Alma 34:15-16. I'll talk about verse 16 in a moment.

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

So whose love do I seek? Whether it be God, our Father, or Jesus, His Son, the love I seek is the same. Both men are willing to do all that is required to enable me to safely return home one day. No sacrifice has been shied away from. No trial of their love denied. Their love for me is perfect, complete, and unending. The entire Plan of Salvation has been designed to embody that love and demonstrate the extent to which either of them will go in order for our salvation to be secured.

The quality of God's love

God's love for us is so complete, so pure, so constant and unending, that we describe God as the embodiment of love. Hence the reference in 1 John 4:8 where it is simply stated that "God is love." What we need to be careful about is the danger of equating God's love with tolerance and indulgence. His love is indeed perfect. It is unending, but

that does not mean that the great Law Giver will tolerate sin (disobedience) in any degree, for he has told us he will not.

The limits of God's love

Just as I can love my child, yet not allow my child to spit in the food of his/her brothers and sisters without a consequence, so too will the Lord hold us accountable for our behavior. Yes, we can do anything we please, but that does not mean he condones bad behavior. His love can only be demonstrated to those who love him in return. To do otherwise would destroy both the laws of justice and mercy.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord tells us that every blessing comes as a result of our obedience to the law that brings that blessing (D&C 130:20-21). This tells us that every law from God brings with it either a blessing for obedience or a punishment for disobedience. There is no such thing as being allowed to ignore a law, like it doesn't exist. All of our moral choices are either bringing us into compliance with God's laws or drawing us further out of compliance with those laws. Our choice. But we don't get to choose the consequence of our choices.

Qualifying for God's love

Does this mean that God doesn't love me if I don't keep His commandments? Of course not. He created the laws, which if followed will bring us back into His presence to live with Him and Christ forever. His love is perfect for all of His children, but it is our agency that allows us to spurn that love for other interests and desires. This is what Satan is using to keep us separated from the blessings Jesus offers us.

This is why the Savior tells us that we need to abide in his love. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Only those who care enough about Jesus and the hope he offers us through repentance are willing to obey the commandments He has given us. Obedience is how we demonstrate our love for God. We can, of course, ignore God and His commandments, but the blessings available to us from God can only be had through obedience to the laws that bring those blessings.

This is why God's people are more blessed than other people. They are obeying the laws that bring those blessings. Jesus actually delights in being able to bless us. He wants us

to be as happy as He and our Father in Heaven are happy, but we cannot ever achieve that happiness unless we are willing to live the same kind of life they lead.

Abiding in God's love

Jesus abides in his Father's love. He wants us to do the same by abiding in his (Jesus') love. Here is John 15:9-10.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

That seems pretty straight forward. Jesus has received all the blessings offered by our Father by keeping His commandments. He wants us to do the same. If we keep all the commandments Jesus gives us we will receive all the blessings he has to offer as well.

To abide in his love is to keep his commandments. The laws and commandments were given to us because he loves us. He wants us to repent so we can be forgiven of our sins. True happiness, the kind that lasts forever, is only available to those who live a lifestyle that promotes lasting happiness. This is what obedience to the commandments brings.

When I mentioned Alma 34:15-16 I said I would talk about verse 16 in a moment. Here is verse 16 again:

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

The important point to remember here is that Christ's atoning sacrifice makes it possible for ALL to repent and find happiness in living a life of obedience. Repentance is how we change course from being disobedient to obedient. All the blessings available in the Plan of Salvation our Father created for us come through our obedience to the laws given to us from Jesus.

So what happens if we ignore or reject the laws Jesus has given us? What becomes of us in the day of judgment? Verse 16 says that those who exercised no faith unto repentance are "exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice". What does that mean?

When we sin, either by commission or omission, we break a law of God. At some point we will have to pay for that act of disobedience. If there is no atonement available to us, such as the atonement made and offered by Jesus then we will have to suffer the full weight of the punishment for each of our acts of disobedience.

The payment of those sins is what happens when we spend time in hell before the resurrection. We won't be released from hell until we have suffered all we can suffer for the unrepentant sins we have committed. Even then it is Christ's atonement what allows us to be released eventually so we can be resurrected. But our suffering will be exquisite and our punishment severe.

Those who exercise faith that leads to repentance suffer for their sins to a much lesser degree, and their sorrowing is replaced with the sweet forgiveness and relief that comes from experiencing the love of God. This is what Christ's suffering has brought to us. We can be freed from the pains of hell, forgiven of our sins, and through the grace of God we can be empowered to change and become better than we are today. Each and every day that we continue to repent and seek the blessings of God we are given the rewards of being obedient to the laws of God.

Abiding in the love Jesus offers me means that I choose each day to seek the blessings his love offers me. I will be free from the pains of hell that will surely belong to those who reject the great sacrifice He made for each of us. The blessings of those who live a celestial or godly life become active in my life because they are only available to those who learn to live as God lives. That is done by repenting and following the example of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

I highly recommend reading Elder Christofferson's masterful Conference talk.



["Abide in My Love"](#)

By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Click the link below to
print a PDF copy of the article.

Abiding in God's Love