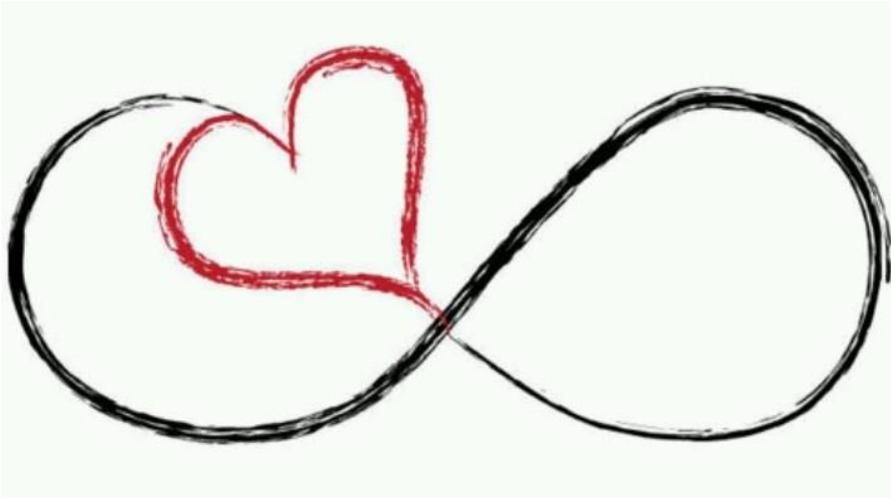


Daily Life with Christ. Love-36: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of proper love: Sharing in God's eternal love.



(Pdf copy at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/041618.pdf>; for background and complete series, see <http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>).

George: OK, I can see what you are saying when you say there is a distinction between human natural love and divine supernatural love. I get what you are saying when you say that each love is according to each nature—human love is according to human nature and divine love is according to divine nature. I also agree with you that it seems self-evident that there are some unbelievers who have greater natural human love than some believers.

Stephen: Unfortunately, it is true that some unbelievers have a more naturally developed human love than some believers. But I would say that this is not the case in the majority of situations that I am familiar with from teaching in Christian schools. It is my guess that most Christian families do manifest a greater human love than unbelievers because of their different worldview. A Christian family can see each other in terms of eternal value and divine worth. This is not possible for the unbeliever/atheist—for the unbeliever life ends like a bad dream: all is lost, all relationships, all loves, all meaning, all significance—everything ends and its forever.

George: But most unbelievers I know do not live like life is a bad dream—some do quite well celebrating life with family members. Some even enjoy life more than some believers.

Stephen: True, but the undeniable truth remains. They can only suppress this reality for so long. They do not have the courage to realize that if there is no God, as per their worldview, then they and all of their loved ones have no eternal significance any more than a tree, which will likely outlive all of family members.

George: I would like to go back to the two different loves—the human natural love that is developed naturally by man according to his natural human nature and the divine, eternal, transcendent love that exists only in God and totally out of reach of man’s natural ability to achieve, copy, or enjoy. My question is that given that man is finite and earthly how could any man participate in the eternal, transcendent, timeless, perfect love of God? What is the connection point? God is spirit and man is material. How do they connect? Doesn’t there have to be some compatibility between the two?

Stephen: The compatibility is found in the image of God that is in man?

George: What is the image of God in man?

Stephen: Man’s immaterial/spiritual intellect and will. When the believer participates, partakes of divine nature as per 2 Peter 1:4: “given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,” man’s intellect and will are raised supernaturally into the very life of the triune God and partake of His very own incomprehensible love.

George: The passage that you just quoted said that it is through the “exceedingly great and precious promises” that we partake of divine nature. Does that not teach that we can just take the promises of God in the Bible and recite them in prayer to God and be elevated into God’s very own immeasurable love?

Stephen: No! It does not work that way.

George: Why not?

Stephen: Well, you are a believer, right? Well, go find one of His exceeding promises in the Word of God and apply it and see if it works . . . see for yourself if it is real. Don’t misunderstand me, the promises are the means of participating in the divine nature and sharing in His knowledge for the perfection of the intellect (as per faith-knowledge) and the perfection of the will (as per sharing in His unconditional, boundless love). But to think that we can just memorize or recite passages, or claim by faith promises in various biblical passages, and we will be magically brought into the very life, knowledge, and love of God is wrongheaded on many levels. You do not have to believe me. Try it. Go confess your sins (so you have a clean slate), and then turn to one of the exceedingly great promises in the Bible, and believe it with all of your heart, and see if you are instantly lifted up into the immeasurable and incomprehensible love of God.

George: Well, when I do confess my sins and He forgives me, I no longer have mental attitude sins. I gain a relaxed attitude, which is love, or at least the means of me becoming an open vessel for the Holy Spirit to exercise His love through me.

Stephen: Where in the Bible does it talk about love being a relaxed attitude or having a relaxed attitude is the conduit for spirituality? I am afraid this whole way of thing is a product of modern anti-realistic philosophy that has, in effect, subjected the Word of God to postmodernism's deconstructionism, which always destroys the true/good/beauty of objective truth of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God. Surely, you do not think that by confessing your sins and adopting a relaxed attitude for the Holy Spirit to work that you actually move into a new dimension of the eternal, unfathomable, pure, self-sacrificial, immutable, and perfect love of God? I think you know this is not how it works.

George: No, it is not that instantaneous. One has to grow in this love? One has to develop it.

Stephen: Develop God's love? But God's love is already perfect. I thought you agreed that human love is developed, but God's nature is intrinsically according to divine nature only, and is perfect and unconditional. How do we develop God's love? How can a finite person develop infinite and measureless love?

George: We have to try to love the unlovable and as we grow we can do this increasingly.

Stephen: If you have to try to be more loving, then you are trying by your human power and you will never make it. You might very well increase your human love, but no matter how much you perfect your human love, you will always be painfully aware that it falls short of God's love, the love that is inherent to God and not perfectable—it is already perfect. No matter how hard you try or how many verses you claim, you are finite and unable to reach the level to tap into God's very own trinitarian love.

George: Well then, how does one partake of God's nature, and by doing so partake of His infinite, immutable, blessed, transcendent, unconditional, immeasurable, and incomprehensible love?

Stephen: In a second person personal relationship. This is analogous to sharing in the lives of others, which, as we have seen, always takes place in a 2nd person relationship.

George: Can you give me a Scripture example?

Stephen: Sure, Luke 7:44-47.

George: But we can't do what she did. Doesn't the passage you quoted earlier about participating in the divine nature tell us that God has given us exceedingly great promises, so we can share in His nature?

Stephen: Yes, but these promises are not to be treated as magical words, like incantations. All of God's promises only operate in a 2nd person relationship. Here are a few passages that illustrate the 2nd person relationship (even if they are not all written in 2nd person language): Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" John 6:35,

“And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” John 7:38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” A second person relationship is radically different than a 1st person relationship (believing and quoting passages for myself) or 3rd person relationship (thinking about how He will do this if I believe these passages). Participation in the nature of God is always personal, and the only orientation that is personal is 2nd person—as we previously noted.

George: So, the only way to participate in the life of God is through a 2nd person relationship? . . . the only way to participate in God’s boundless love, the love that He has for each member of the Trinity, and the love that He has for every single being is in a 2nd person relationship? that simply by orienting to 2nd person relationship, as per prayer, I can enter into God’s own life?

Stephen: No! But that is the minimum. It is the most basic requirement. In fact, without a 2nd person relationship with God, there is no personal love and without personal love there are absolutely no other spiritual virtues—love for God is the root, hinge, form, and fruit of any and all spiritual virtue. Without divine love, we are limited to the natural human realm—period! Without divine love, no amount of sacrifice or human love has any spiritual value or life with God, 1 Cor. 13.3. No matter how we try, no matter how many resolutions, without a 2nd person personal transcendent sharing of lives with God we continue to fail and miss the whole point of life.

George: Can you give me an example of believers living in God and thus enjoying supernatural faith, hope, and love without having to develop these qualities by intensive memorization of Scripture.

Stephen: Sure! 1 Thessalonians 1. Read the chapter and notice their supernatural faith, hope, and love. The fact that this was not developed by intensive Bible study is self-evident from the fact that the New Testament epistles were not written at this time. They had no Bible. What they did have was a 2nd person relationship with God as evident from the first chapter. Of course, we should study our Bibles, my point is that the supernatural faith, hope, and love is not developed by human means, not even by Bible study. They are all supernatural divine gifts given to those in a 2nd person relationship with God. The fact that we have written Bibles just gives us more opportunities to enter into personal relationship of sharing in the life of God.