

“The Father’s Love”

What draws a person to God? While guilt might lead a person to seek the Lord, Scripture tells us that God’s love is what draws His people to Himself. John writes, “For God so loved the world” (3:16). But God’s love can be easily misunderstood. On the one hand, do not misunderstand God’s love as the priority of feeling, such as sentimentalism. Instead, Scripture also defines for us God’s love in terms of action. The apostle Paul tells us that God demonstrates His own love for us that while we were sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). A sentimental account of love can too easily be swayed by every wind of doctrine. It can easily leave Jesus out of its definition. But Scripture refuses to define the Father’s love apart from Jesus. In fact, Scripture reveals that the act of Christ crucified displays the Father’s love for sinners. On the other hand, do not misunderstand Jesus’s death on the cross. Paul doesn’t mean that Jesus convinces the Father to love sinners, as if the Son must twist the arm of the Father. This is no cosmic child abuse. This is the love of God willingly displayed in the death of Christ. As the 17th century theologian John Owen writes, the Father’s love is the “fountain” of all His gracious dispositions toward sinners.

This Scriptural truth was made clear to me again after I finished the book *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. *The Road* is a dystopian novel about a father leading his son to safety. Along the way there are numerous threats they encounter. If you haven’t read it, I won’t spoil the threats other than to describe them as horrifying. But what struck me was the reason for which the father led, protected, and provided for his son. The Father loved his son.

I don’t know whether McCarthy intended to illustrate the love of God the Father, but Scripture interprets the fact of Christ’s crucifixion as the demonstration of the Father’s love in Christ for sinners. And, as Paul says in Titus 3, God’s love in Christ crucified is the very hinge upon which sinners draw close to Him.

The Father’s love in Christ is a reason sinners find consolation in troubling times. While sinners might agree that Jesus was a good man, the difficulty arises when one considers the Father’s acceptance of them. What is his heart toward sinners? As Owen explains, “Christians walk oftentimes with exceedingly troubled hearts, concerning the thoughts of the Father toward them.” Do not be troubled, Christian, and let your heart take courage, for the Father’s love in Christ crucified is the fountain from which all of His blessings flow.

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