The Pilgrim's Quest

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and ***confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims*** *on the earth. For they that say such things* ***declare plainly that they seek a country.***" (Heb. 11:13,14)

Pilgrim's Quest Bible Church
Pastor Garry E. Huff

" Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Psalm 23
vs. 6a

As the Shepherd's sheep ever nears the Shepherd's home, the Shepherd anoints the heads of His sheep with the precious anointing oil. How unexpectedly for the sheep to have this fragrance poured upon their heads. The head - the center for all that is thought, said, heard, seen, and discerned; the center of choosing and doing; the center for the self and will to initiate action. This oil possesses that fragrance of the Shepherd that inundates the heart, soul, and mind of the sheep. It is to have that fragrant aroma of the Shepherd ever near and ever present no matter what we are thinking or doing. This *"anointing oil"* is the Holy Spirit that has been given by God the Father to His Son and now poured out by Jesus upon the heads of His flock.

It would have been a marvelous opportunity to personally witness the one hundred twenty Christians who were in one accord on the day of that initial outpouring. What verbal praises that exalted the Lord Jesus Christ would be heard! What singing of Psalms would be rendered uplifting the heart to heaven! What glorious exhortations would be given - all united in one accord prior to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit! No wonder that when the mighty rushing wind of the Holy Spirit filled their hearts and minds they did speak in sixteen different languages concerning the "wonderful works of God." Their hearts were prepared in unity for heaven's fragrance to be poured out upon them. This was finally highlighted by Peter's powerful sermon on the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. The

Church of Christ was born to not only spread the good news concerning Christ throughout the Roman Empire, but the Church was accompanied with the fragrance of Christ's own likeness. The Lord's sheep not only spoke of the Good Shepherd that they were following, but their very life possessed the fragrance of their Shepherd's presence. They had no room to proudly speak about a "power" they possessed or a self-centered "super-spirituality" that they had obtained. Their hearts and faces were set upon their Shepherd who was taking them to a land far beyond the horizon. Truly, they were now fully identified with a different world, a different country, and a different kingdom. While their feet touch the *terra firma* of their nativity, their heads were soaring upwards to a heavenly home that was being prepared for them by their Shepherd.

But while on their journey the sheep are introduced to "goodness" and "mercy." The Psalmist says, " Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." During this journey across the many miles with hills, plains, mountains, and valleys, two sentinel sheepdogs have been continually nipping at the sheep's heels. One is named "Goodness" (loving kindness) and the other is called "Mercy" (tender mercies). They have been pursuing the sheep with a nip or two along the way always for the benefit and good of the sheep. These constant companions keep the sheep on the proper path and urge them ever close to the Shepherd.

Is it not true that the Christian sees time and time again in the midst of life's situations and troubles the "mercy" of God, the "goodness" of God, and the "tender care" of God. The prophet Jeremiah witnessed the terrible and horrible complete destruction of Jerusalem. His beloved temple that Solomon had built was demolished. Upon viewing the landscape of the ruins of Jerusalem, he pinned by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." Even in the greatest hour of horrific want, God is there. His mercy is there. His goodness is there. His faithfulness is there. It surely takes an "anointed" heart to find the fragrance of God in times of desperate need. Thus, the Christian constantly leans heavily upon His beloved Lord and His "anointing oil" for the head.

These two faithful sheepdogs are constant reminders as guardians of the journey heavenward. Yes, over the hills, across the plains,

through the valleys, around the bends loving kindness and tender mercies have been our constant dutiful companions. They not only protect the sheep from straying, but they also press the sheep nearer to the Shepherd in order that they may personally know their Shepherd.

During the Apostle Paul's imprisonment because of the gospel of Christ, he writes to the Philippians, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death." The Apostle Paul had met the Lord face to face on the road to Damascus and was fully converted. He had faithfully preached the gospel. He had been on Missionary Journeys for the Lord. He had witnessed unspeakable glories of heaven. Nine of his thirteen epistles he had penned. Now in his tenth letter he writes, "***that I may know him***." Paul was ever pressing and longing for a deeper personal knowledge with the Lord while suffering and imprisoned. He wanted these events to help him to "know personally" His Lord deeper and richer.

It is in these kind of moments when we are conscious of the workings of goodness and mercy. It is here we come to personally know the Lord. Every trial, every test, every tribulation, every suffering, we are compelled to draw closer to the Savior because of the work of goodness and mercy.

But what was Paul wanting to know personally of Jesus Christ? What is there to be personally learned in drawing closer to the Lord? Why is the journey to heaven rocky and troublesome at times? What is there to know about the Shepherd that is so important? Paul in the book of Romans states, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... ***Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ***shall be able to separate us from the love of God***, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We would have never known about the infinite, incomprehensible love of God if the way was smooth and easy. God's great love is revealed not by the absence of turmoil, trouble, and tribulation but in the very middle of it. It is here Jesus manifests His deepest, pointed, and perfect love to us. When in the day of trouble, we call upon Him and he will deliver us. When He chastens ⇨

us, we know He loves us.

While we cannot discern God's thoughts and God's ways, we may know His heart. His heart of love that not only saves and delivers us from sin, but also, a love that desires for us to dwell with Him for all eternity. As the Shulamite speaks of her beloved Solomon (a type of Christ), "I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not...The watchmen that go about the city found me: *to whom I said,* Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?... *It was* but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go ...My beloved is mine, and I am his."

It takes the present anointing oil to fully appreciate the Lord's deep love during the greatest of crises. It is these two sheepdogs who yap at the heels of the sheep who encourage the sheep to draw near to the Shepherd - to know Him and to love Him with all their hearts.

"Just to know my precious Savior is to love Him, I have found Him always loving, constant, true. There's no other Friend so great but He's above him, What my Savior is to me He'll be to you."

Chas.W. Vaughan

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." (Psalm 119:71)

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: **Whom having not seen, ye love**; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls." (1Peter 1:7-9)

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: **That I may know him**, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Philippians 3:8 - 11)

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: **Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.** The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet,* and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." (Hab. 3:17 - 19)