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

The Call to a Christ-Like Love

"God is Love"

(Part 1)

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is love.**" (I John 4:8)

When Martin Luther was in "protective captivity" at Wartburg from the "outlaw ban" of Emperor Charles V, Protestantism at his beloved Wittenburg was in great peril. Fanatic radicalism was spreading among the youth. Carlstadt, who took Luther's place, was preaching revolution. False prophets appeared advocating new revelations saying the Word of God was insufficient. Division existed among Protestant Christians. Violence had erupted. The "Capital of Protestantism," Wittenburg, was in disarray. What Luther had established, based upon Scripture, was within a few weeks in jeopardy.

Luther returned to his beloved city and would preach a series of messages from his pulpit beginning at the first available opportunity. The people of Wittenburg had heard that Luther was back and would soon preach. The next Sunday the church was crowded in anticipation of what Luther was going to say. How would he de-escalate the violence, revolution, and false doctrines that were present? Would he commend or condemn what was happening? What would the "Champion of Justification by Faith" preach to this divided flock?

In the pulpit, Luther acknowledged before the congregation

their progress they had made in faith. He proceeded to inquire into their conduct in his absence, and told his audience what he had heard. He then proceeded to say, "We need something more than faith; we need charity. What does a mother do to her infant? At first she gives it milk, then some very light food. If she were to begin by giving it meat and wine, what would be the consequences? So should we act towards our brethren. ... Observe the sun! He dispenses two things, light and heat. There is no king so powerful as to bend aside its rays; they come straight to us; but heat is radiated and communicated in every direction. Thus faith, like light, should always be straight and inflexible; but charity, like heat, should radiate on every side. and bend to all the wants of our brethren. ... God does more by his Word alone than you and I and all the world by our united strength. God lays hold upon the heart; and when the heart is taken, all is won." With these words and subsequent sermons, the trouble in Wittenburg was quelled.

Luther struck upon a great principle. All truth targets the heart and possesses both illumination and heat. Great shafts of heavenly light from God's Word shines with truth to enlighten the mind and warmth of love for the heart. How clear this is when the Lord after His resurrection, appeared to two walking on the road to Emmaus. The Lord opened the Word of God "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." When the eyes of the two were enlightened, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?" If the truth hits the target of the heart both faith and charity will result.

One writer who commented upon the topic "God is Love" stated, "Love is the source of all, the force of all, and the bond of all in Godhead. Holiness is love in its spotlessness; joy is love in its overflowing; peace is love in undisturbed repose; goodness is love providing; patience is love enduring; zeal is love burning; and wrath is love's vengeneance upon the wickedness of an impenitent world."

God is love. All that He is, or does comes from this very essence of God. God's love cannot be separated from His Word. God's love cannot be separated from His commandments. God's love cannot be separated from His law. Any doctrine, theology, or belief that is unattached to God's love is unbiblical. It may be intelligently and reasonably rendered to satisfy the mind, but it is insufficient to reveal "**the love of**

God" to satisfy the heart. There is the need for that theology that is generated by the Holy Spirit to produce that love for the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Will this not be that **"perfect love"** for God that will be spawned by the Holy Spirit in the heart?

One of the great working principles of the Holy Spirit is the "pouring out" of the love of God. Romans 5:5 states, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The picture is, that the Holy Spirit runs greedily to copiously and generously pour God's love into the heart. That same love that originates from God's own heart is now to fill up man's heart.

One of the later epistles, Jude, the writer is burdened about the state of affairs that was evident among Christians - the need to defend the faith. "Certain men" had "crept in unawares ... turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." But Jude stresses the need that in the midst of this defense to "keep yourselves in the love of God." No matter how straight the arrows of truth may be, they must be saturated with the love of God. When these arrows hit the target, God's great love will overflow the heart.

It is interesting to note the many times the Lord would say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." God's truth is forever joined with His love, and His love is forever joined with truth. The preaching of truth without love is not biblical, and preaching love without truth is likewise unbiblical. There is the possibility of presenting a loveless truth and a truthless love. The shaft of light emanating from God has both intimately combined light and heat together for the need of man's heart.

God hates sin, but loves the sinner. While God's Word condemns, yet His Word reveals love's remedy. He abhors man's wickedness, but He is a God full of mercy and love. God's truth reveals the consequences of impenitent sinners. Even still, God's love declares that whosoever believes in the provision given by His Son will have everlasting life. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ... Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

The Love of God

The love of God is greater far
Then tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall;
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call;
God's love, so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race-
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean full,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were ev-'ry stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God, above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky,

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

F. M. Lehman - Meir Ben Isaac Nehoral

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Jn. 3:16)

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (I Jn. 4:10)

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." (Jn. 15:9)