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"

Love and Law

(Part 3)

"O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day."
"...thy law do I love." (Psalm 119:97, 113)

It was needful for God, who is love, to reveal the intricate relationship between love and truth. Love is "shed abroad" freely by the Holy Ghost. *(Rom. 5:5)* The Holy Ghost may withdraw His presence removing that love which is so indispensable in accompanying truth. Without love, truth becomes stale, static, and sterile missing any spark of life, and is unable to make a "lasting impact" within the heart. Truth basically becomes mere "biblical information" so that man is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." *(II Tim. 3:7)* Did not the Apostle Paul say it so well by the anointing of the Holy Ghost in I Corinthians 13? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." When the Holy Spirit departs and the "pouring forth" of God's love is missing, truth becomes nothing more than "sounding brass."

It was needful to reveal to man by "holy men" as "they were moved by the Holy Ghost" to write not just the nature of God's love

but that "God is love." Man would have never realized, with all of his intellect and genius, that truth. The variety of vicissitudes and circumstances of life would have prevented man to come to this conclusion on his own.

It is unfortunate that the Old Testament is viewed primarily as God's law, and God's love is overlooked. The Old Testament seems so negative, unloving, judgmental, and heartless. Only the New Testament is viewed as God's Revelation of "love" as if law had been abolished. The Lord Jesus Christ made it crystal clear in the Sermon on the Mount, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." *(Mt. 5:17)* "He came to fill the law, to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold."

God in His loving wisdom knew that Israel needed law as God's chosen people for Canaan, the Land of Promise. Israel had been in Egypt for 215 years. Of that time, they were bondslaves for 144 years. They had lived in a country dominated in every area of life by false religion and false gods. For 215 years they offered no burnt offering. There was no patriarch to lead them. There was no prophet and no written revelation from God. The fourth generation, that was born in Egypt's slavery, was now in their prime. All they had were God's oral promises to Abraham, the words of Joseph, *(God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land)*, and their "cry" that "came up unto God by reason of their bondage." Their new found liberty could open the door for lawlessness, disaster, and self inflicted annihilation. What was urgently essential for this multitude of three million people was law.

They needed law for the proper establishment of worship. Thus, God gave them the statutes covering the ceremonial law pertaining to the sacrifices. They needed law that would govern their relationship to one another; so, God gave them the judgments that would be the civil judicial authority. God also gave the commandments which would be the moral law to establish character before God and man.

It would be a mistake to assume that law was not given by a thoughtful and loving God that was necessary for Israel's hope of a permanent future existence. It would be a mistake to assume that God did not express His love in the Old Testament.

A careful reading of the Old Testament reveals His love. In Deu-

teronomy 7:8 it says, "But because **the LORD loved you**, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoah king of Egypt." In the book of Jeremiah during the horrific days of Judah's backsliding and apostasy, it is recorded, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, **I have loved thee with an everlasting love**: therefore with **lovingkindness** have I drawn thee." *(Jeremiah 31:3)* Even in the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, in chapter 1 verses 1 and 2, "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi, **I have loved you**, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: **yet I loved Jacob**."

When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon she observed, "Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because **the LORD loved Israel for ever**, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice." *(I Kings 10:9)*

The Old Testament acknowledges God's love. It proves that God dearly loved his people, Israel. God's law does not oppose God's love. Neither does God's love oppose God's law. God's love is the fruition of what God desired in giving the law. The law was to control unruly lawless man with the hope that grace would come to man's heart and bring about a love that would be the rule of the heart. Law is the training school of discipline until love becomes the ruling principle of life. When God's love finally penetrates the heart, we will run to the Father and embrace Him in love; because, He loved us so much that He disciplined us according to His perfect and good law. ("And his commandments are not grievous." *(I John 5:3)*)

It became necessary, however, for God to reveal not only the relationship between love and truth, and the very essence of God that He is love; but also, it was needful to clarify the meaning of "love." God needed to define what "love" is. The Old Testament was not the place nor the time to reveal the meaning of God's love. The Old Testament Hebrew was not explicit enough to convey the love of God's heart. Hebrew lacks the "technical depths" to adequately express what God wanted man to know about "love." God utilized the Greek language (of the New Testament) and the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies to accurately communicate His heart of love.

Redeemed

Redeemed - how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child, and forever, I am.

Redeemed and so happy in Jesus,
No language my rapture can tell;
I know that the light of His presence
With me doth continually dwell.

I think of my blessed Redeemer,
I think of Him all the day long;
I sing, for I cannot be silent;
His love is the theme of my song.

I know I shall see in His beauty
The King in whose law I delight;
Who lovingly guardeth my footsteps,
And giveth me songs in the night.

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed, redeemed,
His child, and forever I am.

Fanny J. Crosby

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." (Ps. 37:30,31)

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Ps. 40:8)

"Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings." (Isa. 51:7)

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)