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"
Defined
(Part 4)

"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 John 4:10

It was absolutely necessary for God to reveal to man a love unfamiliar to him. In order to do this, it was important for God's own Son to come in human flesh and dwell among man so that man could behold the glory of that love. It was also needful for God to employ a human language that was more meticulous in expressing God's love. The Hebrew language was just not adequate enough to reveal the love of God. In the fulness of time of human history, the Lord Jesus Christ came among His own people while the Greek language was the common language spoken in the public concourse of the Mediterranean World.

The English language, much like the Hebrew, does not posses the ability to convey any distinction in the use of "love." It is ambiguous in communicating any depth of meaning. The understanding of love is basically anything that produces a positive response of emotion whether delight, enjoyment, or pleasure. If an object or event can produce such a reaction, it is loved. Love is thus expressed covering a broad spectrum including pets, scenic vistas, food, family, hobbies,

occupations, husbands and wives, and the list is endless. Some people love the "adrenaline rush" when they expose themselves to dangerous and hazardous situations. Included in all these earthly human experiences, the heavenly love of God is added without distinction. A new language was needed to disclose a love yet unknown.

Due to the conquest of Alexander the Great, the Greek language became the prominent language of the Western World. So much so that the younger Jewish generation was losing their ability to understand Hebrew. A group of seventy or seventy-two Jewish elders took it upon themselves to translate the Old Testament into the Greek. Known as the Septuagint, the translation would use different Greek words for "love." It has been inferred that they may have coined the word, *agapeo*, that is used the most in the Christian context.

One Greek scholar stated, "It should not be forgotten that *agape* is a word born within the bosom of revealed religion: it occurs in the Septuagint and in the Apocrypha; but there is no trace of it in heathen writers whatever..." The Greeks believed *phileo* was the most important word for "love" because the object of love was man. They were drawn to the wisdom of man. The Olympic games displayed man's physical abilities. Their gods and goddesses were depicted in human form. Architecture revealed man's ability to construct temples of stone which baffle the mind even today. With such philanthropy, *agapeo* was never used.

Agapeo is love that is not based upon what is received from an object. It is a love of choice. It is a love based upon the decision of the will in selecting what is to be loved. It is a self-denying, self-sacrificing love that has compassion and devotion upon the object chosen.

Since God is love *(agapeo)*, He loves not because the object gives Him pleasure. But to the contrary, God chooses to love that which gives Him no delight, no enjoyment, and no pleasure. Even the most vile, wicked, debauched, wretched, hater of God, murderer, enemy to God's Kingdom, God chooses to love. He proves His love by giving His only begotten Son to be the substitute and bearer of the sins of the "worst of the worst," so that they may be saved from a destiny of hellish punishment to enjoy life everlasting.

This also means that there is no goodness in the object God

chooses that brings Him delight, enjoyment, or pleasure. As Isaiah said, "... all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." *(Isa. 64:6)* The Psalmist David would add, "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one." *(Ps.14:3)*

It is a great mistake to assume that God loves us because we have something to offer Him. We may be good, kind, nice, and obedient. Somehow, we think these things are acceptable and worthy of His love. Yet, even these "good things" are polluted, dirty, filthy, and are of no value in His eyes. God looks at the heart. Here, He finds only corruption because we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. Every individual must realize the wretchedness and ruin of the heart though the outward manner may be pleasing. God sees the heart. He ignores the outward appearance. God only delights in us when Christ dwells in the heart and His righteousness is imputed to us.

We must also not confuse God's love with the element that brings salvation. Love is the cause of salvation, but blood is the element. Just because God chooses to love us does not mean we are saved and have everlasting life. We must accept the provision that was given because of His love, namely, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins.

The Gospels speak about a rich young ruler who came to the Lord asking, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Here is a prominent rich young man who had kept the commandments from his childhood. He was good. He was obedient. His goodness, however, did not satisfy his need of salvation for he still "lacked" something. The Bible states that, "Jesus beholding him loved him." The Lord did not love this young man because of his goodness, neither did the love of Jesus automatically give him eternal life. There was an earthly treasure of riches that he loved more and he could not forsake it to follow Christ. God's love brings us to the provision of blood that gives entrance into eternal life.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Whether we are evil or good, God chose to love us while we were unlovable. We open our hands not to give God something, but to receive His great gift of love by grace through faith in his Son, Jesus.

Lord Jesus, Thou Who Only Art

Lord Jesus, Thou who only art
The endless source of purest joy,
O come and fill this longing heart;
May nought but Thee my tho'ts employ.
Teach me on Thee to fix my eye,
For none but Thee can satisfy.

The joys of earth can never fill
The heart that's tasted of Thy love;
No portion would I seek until
I reign with Thee, my Lord, above,
When I shall gaze upon Thy face,
And know more fully all Thy grace.

When from Thy radiant throne on high
Thou didst my fall and ruin see,
Thou cam'st on earth for me to die,
That I might share that throne with Thee.
Loved with an everlasting love,
My hopes, my joys are all above.

O, what is all that earth can give?
I'm called to share in God's own joy;
Dead to the world, in Thee I live,
In Thee I've bliss without alloy:
Well may I earthly joys resign;
All things are mine, and I am Thine!

Author Unknown

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." (I Sam. 16:7)

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psa 51:5)

"For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Co 5:2)