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

"The Lord's Ministry of Love in Teaching"

Part 1

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them saying,"
(Matthew 5:1, 2)

What a privilege the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ possessed to personally witness the love of God! Jesus, the sinless Son of God, exhibited as the perfect paragon of God's love in His actions, words, demeanor, facial expressions, tone of voice. In every aspect He displayed that God is love. Never did He cease from being love. Never did He depart from love. All that Christ did was the perfect, pure expression of God's love. It was impossible for Him to be anything but love, because Jesus was God and God is love!

What love must have been expressed in His tone of voice to a woman "taken in adultery" when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Or what loving joy the Lord could declare to one sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Or what loving delight state to a dying thief in the midst of His own agony and suffering , "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

What manner of love was expressed in the Lord's facial expression when He turned and "looked upon Peter" after Peter had denied the Lord three times. Did this not break Peter's own heart as he

"went out and wept bitterly?"

There was a day during Passion week the Lord beheld His beloved city of Jerusalem. The Lord outwardly lamented with great weeping for He knew in just a few years the city and the temple would be destroyed. The Lord's words were filled with pathos as He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

But, the love of Jesus was also present when He "made a scourge of small cords," overthrew the moneychanger's tables, and drove out those that made the house of God a place of merchandise. The Lord was cleaning house for it had become a "den of thieves."

The Lord's love did not subside when He was angry and grieved. Neither was it absent when He identified the hypocrisy of the Judaistic leaders. His love neither excused nor ignored sin, but exposed it so that sin may be confessed and forgiven.

After the Lord had assembled His group of apostles, He took them up into a mountain to teach them. About half of the Lord's ministry was now past. Two Passovers had come and gone. The Lord and His disciples were back in Galilee. With a heavenly tone of love in His voice, He taught them saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit ..., Blessed are they that mourn ..., Blessed are the meek ...." Beginning with the Beatitudes the Lord gives what has been called the "Magna Charta of Christ's Kingdom." This "Magna Charta" did not make the Old Testament null and void or in anyway do away with it. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ presented the heart principle which was to be the working motive in His Kingdom. There would be matters concerning the outward witness before others. The Lord also touched upon topics regarding prayer, forgiveness, true piety, judging, and many others.

There is a section in the Lord's sermon in which He addresses "love." The object of that address is "enemies." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy, But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you ..." The Lord is teaching that His disciples are to willingly choose to love that hateful, odious, hostile, person who produces no delight, no enjoy-

ment, and no pleasure in return. It was a command to consistently and continually love their enemies.

The Rabbis of the past had taught that the Jews were to hate their enemies. The Lord was correcting that misconception demanding His followers to love their enemies by showing mercy, kindness, long-suffering, and patience. They were to assist their enemies during times of need regardless of any recompense or reciprocation of their efforts. The Apostle Paul would write to the Romans furthering this understanding, "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The disciples for nearly a year and a half witnessed that love through Jesus Christ as He was confronted with a variety of people. Some were demon possessed. Some were Jewish leaders. Many were His enemies. They often sought opportunity to lay their hands on the Lord to kill him. The Lord could have called for their immediate and instantaneous demise, but the Lord did not because there was a day in which "a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." Even later, the great enemy of the first Christian believers, Saul of Tarsus, became the converted Apostle Paul, the writer of thirteen epistles in the New Testament and missionary to the Gentiles.

Every Christian was once alienated and an enemy of God. We were subject to God's wrath. Death reigned over us. We were without strength. We were all condemned to die. "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved from wrath through him." We love our enemies because the Lord Jesus Christ loved us while we were that hateful, odious, hostile person who brought no delight, no enjoyment, and no pleasure to God who created us and gave us life.

Could it be that a faithful witness in Christian love to an enemy be the instrument God uses to make a champion of grace in the life of another? The greatest enemy the world produces may be the greatest vessel the Lord uses.

Him And Me

My fellowman mistreated me, unreasonably so;
For oft I had befriended him who now appears my foe.
But I shall never stoop to let his act my standard be;
I'd lose by ill I'd do to him --- not what he does to me.

When cruel jest or bitter word comes winging like a dart
Hurled by an enemy to lodge and fester in my heart,
My soul I brace and cast it out to keep my spirit free;
I lose by ill I speak to him --- not what he speaks to me.

Let him besmirch my name and try to trail it in the dust;
My inmost soul no dart can reach to mar with poisonous thrust.
Shall I retaliate? Ah, no, whate'er his slander be,
I'd lose by ill I speak to him --- not what he speaks to me.

My best intentions man may judge but evil all the while,
Yet I pursue my onward course despite his scornful smile.
Let him misjudge me as he will, this changeless truth I see:
I lose by thinking ill of him --- not what he thinks of me.

A. E. Robinson

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in you mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." (Col. 1:21,21)

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (I Tim. 1:12-15)

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil." (Luke 6:35)