

## The Love of God.

One of my favorite hymns is *The Love of God* written by Frederick M. Lehman written in 1917. By far the most beautiful stanza has to be the third which reads:

“Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every 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, Though stretched from sky to sky.”

The amazing thing about these words is that this third stanza is adapted from a Jewish poem *Haddamut*, written in Aramaic in 1050 by Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai, a cantor in Worms, Germany. This poem has been translated into at least 18 languages. When the cantor wrote these lines it was a very unpleasant time. It was as though he was so disappointed with the lack of love on display in Worms at this time and that he was reaching for a love that transcended man's prejudice, man's failings and man's flaws. Lehman came across this writing in the most bizarre way, for these words of the ancient poem had been found penciled on the wall of a patient's room in an insane asylum after he had been carried to his grave. The general opinion is that this inmate had written the epic in moments of sanity. Again, we see a man who has been committed to confinement due to mental anguish, then has a flash of hope that beyond those gray, cold walls of his asylum was indeed true asylum - not from man, but in the arms of a God Who is Love.

In humility and deepest gratitude to God, I thank Him that we, who are Christians, from our hearts are able to say by God's grace we have experienced this love of God. I would agree with someone who once said of God's love, “It is so high you can't get over it, so deep you can't get under it, so wide you can't get around it.” Although we don't have the ability to write an expanse that would go from sky to sky, allow me a few lines to tell what I know about the marvelous love of God.

### **1. God's love is perfect.**

I John 4:17, 18 says, “*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*” Fear has a tormenting hold on our world. Look in nature. The wildebeest is fearful of the lion, little birds are fearful of hawks and cats are afraid of dogs. Fear has a grip on mankind and violence abounds. Here's some good news: God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son that we who have believed upon Him for salvation need never fear coming into judgment. And in the interim between now and then, this perfect love casts out all fear.

One of the most touching stories I came across in my youth tells of a little five-year-old boy, the only son of a wonderful Christian couple. Suddenly and without any prescience, the young mother died. The father, so inexperienced with

the grief process and not knowing how to handle this most devastating situation, chose to keep the heartbreaking news from his little boy. On the day of the funeral he had someone baby-sit the boy. His father told the boy his mother had gone away, but one day they both would see her again. This did not placate the boy's anxious curiosity. He looked all through the house, from top to bottom and inquired most fervently, "Daddy, where is Mommy?" The father said, "Don't worry about your mommy, son, you'll see her again in time." Well Dad's time was not good enough for the boy, so the young child began a neighborhood search and evidently the neighbors were aware of the father's decision to put off telling the boy the whole truth. The situation came to a crisis point when late one night as the boy could not sleep, he ran from his bedroom, down the hall and jumped into his father's bed and tearfully cried out, "Daddy, where's my Mommy?" The father unable to sleep as well, in angst cried back, "Son, you're mommy's dead!" The little boy's heart broke. The dad tried to console him, but he seemed too overwhelmed with this heart-wrenching news and the way in which he received it. The young father began to apologize profusely. And then a sudden calm came into the room, as the little boy snubbed and refrained from crying while he asked, "Daddy, is your face toward me tonight?" In the big lonely bed, the father facing the son replied, "Yes, son, my face is toward you tonight." The little boy sighed deeply and said, "Good, then I can go to sleep." The dad waited until the boy's breathing deepened and he was assured the youngster was asleep and then the heart-broken father walked to the window, pulled open the blinds and looked into the deep starry night and said, "Father, is your face toward me tonight?" Yes, our Heavenly Father's face is toward us tonight and always. No matter what your state of affairs, God's perfect love has the ability to cast out all fear!

## **2. God's love prevents.**

II Corinthians 5:14, 15 says, *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."* The word "constraineth" in Greek is: συνέχω (sunecho) to hold together, arrest, keep in, press, to hold together with constraint, to compress. It was used of a strait that forces a ship into a narrow channel. It was also used for a cattle squeeze, that pushing in on each side, forced the beast into a position where it cannot move so the farmer can administer medication. The word "constrains" in English definitions means to severely restrict the scope, extent, or activity of or to compel or force (someone) toward a particular course of action.

When we receive the love of Christ, it moves us to action. Resisting temptation to do wrong on one hand and being compelled to obedience on the other hand is possible because of Christ's constraining love. I am thinking of a mother, a small framed little woman whose adult son had a car collapse on him while he was underneath working on it. He cried out and the mother came running. Fearing for his life, she took the car by the front bumper and lifted it until he could scramble out from underneath. It was estimated that she dead-lifted four hundred pounds. There is only one explanation - the love for her son

constrained her. How much more should we be moved to resist temptation and obey God for the love of Christ?

**3. God's love is permanent.**

Romans 8:38,39 tells 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.”* If anyone ever questions how long will God's love be intact, the answer was just given by those two wonderful verses of Scripture. God loves His children with a never ending love.

-Pastor Pope-