

Chapel Flock



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[It's Out Of My Hands-](#)
[Matthew West](#)

[Change This Heart-](#)
[Sidewalk Prophets](#)

[Lay Down My Life-](#)
[Sidewalk Prophets](#)

Prayer

Lord, I ask You to give me the insight and wisdom I need for this moment in my life. There is so much I need to know, but I am unable to figure it all out by myself. Today I ask that the Holy Spirit would take away the veil that has obscured my view. I ask that my eyes be opened to see exactly what I need to know. I ask You to give me a real revelation about my life, my situation, and the truth I need to know right now.

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

[" Loving The Lost"](#)

Bob Coy

[" Tears Are A Language God Understands"](#)

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1 THEN SOLOMON assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chiefs of the fathers' houses of the Israelites, before the king in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Zion, the City of David. 2 All the men of Israel assembled themselves before King Solomon at the feast in the seventh month, Ethanim. 3 All the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4 And they brought up the ark of the Lord, the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. 5 King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who had assembled before him were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, so many that they could not be reported or counted. 6 And the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place in the Holy of Holies of the house, under the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its poles. 8 The poles were so long that the ends of them were seen from the Holy Place before the Holy of Holies, but they were not seen outside; they are there to this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 When the priests had come out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the Lord's house, 11 So the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. 12 Then Solomon said, The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. 13 I have surely built You a house of habitation, a settled place for You to dwell in forever. 14 And the king turned his face about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, and all the assembly of Israel stood. 15 He said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, Who spoke with His mouth to David my father and has with His hand fulfilled it, saying, 16 Since the day that I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house that My Name [and My Presence] might be in it, but I chose David to be over My people Israel. 17 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the Name [the Presence] of the Lord, the God of Israel. 18 And the Lord said to David my father, Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for My Name, you did well that it was in your heart. 19 Yet you shall not build the house, but your son, who shall be born to you, shall build it to My Name [and My actively present Person]. 20 And the Lord has fulfilled His promise which He made: I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the Name (renown) of the Lord, the God of Israel. 21 And I have made there a place for the ark [the token of His presence], in which is the covenant [the Ten Commandments] of the Lord which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. 22 Then Solomon stood [in the court] before the Lord's burnt offering altar in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven 23 And he said, O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing mercy and loving-kindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart. 24 You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father. You also spoke with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. 25 Therefore now, O Lord, the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David my father what You promised him when You said, There shall not fail you a man before Me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have done. 26 Now, O God of Israel, let Your word which You spoke to Your servant David my father be confirmed [by experience]. 27 But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, the heavens and heaven of heavens [in its most extended compass] cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built? 28 Yet graciously consider the prayer and supplication of Your servant, O Lord my God, to hearken to the [loud] cry and prayer which he prays before You today, 29 That Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, My Name [and the token of My presence] shall be there, that You may hearken to the prayer which Your servant shall make in [or facing toward] this place. 30 Hearken to the prayer of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray in or toward this place. Hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive. 31 Whenever a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears the oath before Your altar in this house, 32 Then hear in heaven and do and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his guilt upon his own head and justifying the [uncompromisingly] righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness (his uprightness, right standing with God). 33 When Your people Israel are struck down before the enemy because they have sinned against You, and they turn again to You, confess Your name (Your revelation of Yourself), and pray, beseeching You in this house, 34 Then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel and return them to the land You gave to their fathers. 35 When heaven is shut up and no rain falls because they have sinned against You, if they pray in [or toward] this place and confess Your name (Your revelation of Yourself) and turn from their sin when You afflict them, 36 Then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, when You teach them the good way in which they should walk. And give rain upon Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance. 37 If there is famine in the land or pestilence, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, 38 Whatever prayer or supplication is made by any or all of Your people Israel—each man knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading forth his hands toward this house [and its pledge of Your presence]— 39 Then hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart You know, for You and You only know the hearts of all the children of men, 40 That they may fear and revere You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers. 41 Moreover, concerning a stranger who is not of Your people Israel but comes from a far country for the sake of Your name [and Your active Presence]— 42 For they will hear of Your great name (Your revelation of Yourself), Your strong hand, and outstretched arm—when he shall pray in [or toward] this house, 43 Hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger asks of You, so that all peoples of the earth may know Your name [and Your revelation of Your presence] and fear and revere You, as do Your people Israel, and may know and comprehend that this house which I have built is called by Your Name [and contains the token of Your presence]. 44 If Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You shall send them, and shall pray to the Lord toward the city which You have chosen and the house that I have built for Your Name [and Your revelation of Yourself], 45 Then hear in heaven their prayer and supplication, and defend their cause and maintain their right. 46 If they sin against You—for there is no man who does not sin—and You are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the enemy's land, far or near; 47 Yet if they think and consider in the land where they were carried captive, and repent and make supplication to You there, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely and wickedly; 48 If they repent and turn to You with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your Name; 49 Then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven, Your dwelling place, and defend their cause and maintain their right. 50 And forgive Your people, who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions

against You, and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have pity and be merciful to them; 51 For they are Your people and Your heritage, which You brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace. 52 Let Your eyes be open to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, to hearken to them in all for which they call to You. 53 For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be Your heritage, as You declared through Moses Your servant when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God. 54 When Solomon finished offering all this prayer and supplication to the Lord, he arose from before the Lord's altar, where he had knelt with hands stretched toward heaven. 55 And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56 Blessed be the Lord, Who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. Not one word has failed of all His good promise which He promised through Moses His servant. 57 May the Lord our God be with us as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, 58 That He may incline our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His precepts which He commanded our fathers. 59 Let these my words, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause and right of His servant and of His people Israel as each day requires, 60 That all the earth's people may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other. 61 Let your hearts therefore be blameless and wholly true to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as today. 62 And the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord. 63 Solomon offered as peace offerings to the Lord: 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the house of the Lord. 64 On that same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the Lord's house; there he offered burnt offerings, cereal offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive [all] the offerings. 65 So at that time Solomon held the feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, for seven days [for the dedication] and seven days [for the Feast of Tabernacles], fourteen days in all. 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away; they blessed the king and went to their tents with greatest joy and gratitude for all the goodness the Lord had shown to David His servant and Israel His people.



Chapter 8

Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, and they brought the ark of the covenant into the temple, and as they did, the glory of the Lord came and filled the temple and there was just this glorious presence of God even as did take place at the time of the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Now again God's presence, the Shekinah glory of God, filling the temple.

And Solomon there offered his prayer of dedication unto God. And this dedicatory prayer of Solomon's is, of course, a classic as he speaks, first of all, of his building of the temple. And verse seventeen he said,

It was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in your heart to build a house unto my name, you did well that it was in your heart (1Ki 8:17-18).

Now God accounted it to David as having done it because it was in his heart to do, though David was not allowed to do it. God takes your motives many times above your actions. It is possible to have the right actions with the wrong motives. That is not acceptable by God. You may have the right motives, but not carry through an action. The fact that the motive, the desire is there is acceptable by God. Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. God looks upon that which motivates you. And that which is in your heart to do and that's what God counts. What is in your heart to do. Not always am I able to do what's in my heart. You know, it may be that a person is a very generous person but has nothing to give. God sees the heart. He sees the desire of the heart to give. Even though there is nothing to give, God counts the desire of the heart even more than the wealthy person that gives God a pittance of their wealth.

Remember Jesus talking about the little widow. She gave more than the rest. Though it was just a mite, she gave of her substance. The rest of all tossed in out of their abundance. That doesn't count. God sees the heart. He knows the motive of the heart. It's in David's heart to build a temple and inasmuch as it's in his heart, God said that's good. It was in your heart to do. But you can't do it because you've got too much blood on your hands, a man of war.

but your son that shall come out of your own loins, he will build the house in my name. So the LORD hath performed his word that he spoke (1Ki 8:19-20),

Now this affirmation of God's faithfulness to perform His word is something that we need to take note of, verse twenty. For you can be sure that God will perform His word that He declares. And Solomon has now affirmed the fact that God has performed.

and I am risen up in the place of my father David, to sit upon the throne of Israel, and as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt (1Ki 8:20-21). And now Solomon's prayer.

So he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation, he spread forth his hands toward heaven (1Ki 8:22):

So you see Solomon now standing there. And all of the congregation of Israel having assembled. And Solomon lifts his hands unto God and there he begins this prayer of dedication.

O LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, who keeps covenant and mercy with your servants that walk before you with all your heart (1Ki 8:23): God, there's no God like You anywhere. And you have kept with your servant David my father that which you promised him: for you spoke also with your mouth, and you have fulfilled it with your hand, as we see it today (1Ki 8:24).

It's always glorious to stand and see the fulfillment of God's work, God's promise. Lord, You said it and there it is. Always exciting to stand in the fulfillment of God's work.

Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which you promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as you have walked before me. And now, O God of Israel, let your word, I pray thee, be verified, which you spoke to your servant David my father. But will God indeed dwell on earth? behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built? (1Ki 8:25-27)

So Solomon's recognition of sort of the ludicrous situation. "God, the heaven of heavens can't contain You. How much less this house I have built."

But have respect, Lord, toward this place and towards the prayers that are offered here, and hearken to the cries when your servants pray before you: That your eyes may be open on this house day and night, even towards this place where you have said, My name shall be there: and that you'll hearken unto the prayer which your servant shall make toward this place. And hearken to the supplication of your servant, and your people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: hear from heaven thy dwelling place: when you hear, forgive (1Ki 8:28-30).

Beautiful. "Lord, when they pray towards this place, hear from Your dwelling place in heaven. We know You don't really dwell here. You dwell in heaven. But hear and when You hear, O God, forgive."

And now he foresees various situations that may arise.

If any man trespasses against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath comes before your altar in this house: Then hear from heaven, and do, and judge your servants, condemning the wicked, and bringing his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous. When Israel is smitten before their enemies, because they have sinned against thee, and they turn again to thee, and they confess your name, and they pray, and they make their prayers in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive. When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because we have sinned (1Ki 8:31-35);

Now notice that he attributes the national calamities to the sins of the people. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). And the national calamities are the result of the sins of the people. What's that make the United States? You know.

that thou should [verse thirty-six] teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon the land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. And if there's a famine, or a pestilence, a blasting, mildew, or the locust, or caterpillar; if the enemy besieges them; whatsoever plague, or sickness there might be; and prayer and supplication is made by any man, or by all the people. Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even you only, know the hearts of all of the children of men) (1Ki 8:36-39);

As we said earlier, God looks on the heart.

Now if your people go out to battle against the enemies, wherever you send them, and they shall pray unto the LORD towards this city which you have chosen, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause (1Ki 8:44-45).

Now you remember, of course, it goes on here to say,

And if they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and you be angry with them, deliver them into their enemy, so that they are carried away captives to the land of the enemies, either far or near; And if they bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and they repent, and they make supplication unto thee in the land where you have carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so return unto thee with all their heart, with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which you've led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city which you have chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer (1Ki 8:46-49)

Now you remember later on when Daniel was a captive in the land of Babylon. And after the Medo-Persian Empire had overcome the Babylonian Empire, and Darius was tricked into signing the decree that if any man should make a petition or request of anybody else outside of King Darius for a period of thirty years, thirty days, he should be cast into the den of lions. And you remember that Daniel went to his house as was his custom and opened his windows towards Jerusalem and prayed unto the Lord. He was remembering what Solomon had prayed. "Lord, if they're captives in the land and they turn towards this place and pray, hear."

Now earlier on, the prayer of Daniel in the ninth chapter is a beautiful thing indeed, because again, Daniel was thinking of this very passage. For Daniel when he prayed, his prayer was actually a confession of sin. "Lord, we have sinned against Thee. We've done wickedly." And he is confessing the sin, even as Solomon said, "Lord, if they're in captivity and they confess their sin and all..." And Daniel was following the pattern that Solomon had set forth in this prayer of dedication. Turning towards Jerusalem, confessing the sins and asking God's forgiveness and God's help. So Daniel, a very beautiful man because he was a man of the Word. He knew the Word of God. He knew the prophecies of Jeremiah. He knew the time of captivity was about up and following the pattern that Solomon had set in this prayer. Daniel thus prayed unto the Lord out of the captivity in Babylon, and God heard. And they were released from that captivity.

Now when Solomon prayed this prayer, God answered Solomon. And the answer of Solomon is oftentimes quoted by itself and not in context. Second Chronicles 7:14, the Lord's answer to Solomon was, "For if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble

themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will heal their nation" (II Chronicles 7:14). That was God's answer to this prayer of dedication. We'll get that more when we get to Second Chronicles.

Now after he had finished his prayer and supplications, he arose from before the altar of the LORD (1Ki 8:54),

So it said that he was standing, but now he evidently went to his knees because he is rising.

from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread from heaven (1Ki 8:54).

He began by standing, went down to his knees, his hands lifted to heaven.

And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant (1Ki 8:55-56).

Isn't that a great testimony to God? Not one word of His promises have failed.

The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, or forsake us: that we might incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and statutes, and judgments. And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else. And let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, to keep his commandments, as this day (1Ki 8:57-61).

So he's charged the people, "Be perfect with God. Walk in His ways." And so they offered sacrifices before the LORD of peace offerings.

twenty-two thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep (1Ki 8:63).

Probably the biggest barbecue on record. Great time of feasting and rejoicing then before the Lord as they have now completed the house and dedicated the house unto the Lord.

So the same day the king hallowed the middle part of the ground (1Ki 8:64):

He declared it holy because they didn't have enough room to barbecue all of the beef in the area of the sacrifices and all. So they made the whole area holy and they offered up the burned offerings and all, all over the place there.

And at that time Solomon held a feast, all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and then another seven days (1Ki 8:65).

They went out for fourteen days celebrating.

And the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went up unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all of the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people (1Ki 8:66).

That's the way people should always leave the presence of God. Joyful and glad of heart. That's the proper attitude. Having been with God, fellowship with God should always create that joyfulness and the happiness within us.

Shall we pray.

Father, we thank You again for the privilege of studying Your word and may Your Spirit bless it now that we might hide it away in our heart that we might learn from the lessons of history. Lord, help us that we might walk in Thy ways; we might keep Thy word and that we might, O God, experience and know Thy faithfulness and Your keeping Your word to us. We thank You, Father, for the many blessings and the glorious promises that have been given to us and we rest in Thee. In Jesus our Lord. Amen.

(Through The Bible Series C-2000; Chuck Smith; 1979-1986; Commentaries Through The Bible)



"Knowledge Of The Holy" AW Tozer

CHAPTER 20; The Love of God

Our Father which art in heaven, we Thy children are often troubled in mind, hearing within us at once the affirmations of faith and the accusations of conscience. We are sure that there is in us nothing that could attract the love of One as holy and as just as Thou art. Yet Thou hast declared Thine unchanging love for us in Christ Jesus. If nothing in us can win Thy love, nothing in the universe can prevent Thee from loving us.

Thy love is uncaused and undeserved. Thou art Thyself the reason for the love wherewith we are loved. Help us to believe the intensity, the eternity of the love that has found us. Then love will cast out fear; and our troubled hearts will be at peace, trusting not in what we are but in what Thou hast declared Thyself to be. Amen.

The apostle John, by the Spirit, wrote, "God is love," and some have taken his words to be a definitive statement concerning the essential nature of God. This is a great error. John was by those words stating a fact, but he was not offering a definition.

Equating love with God is a major mistake which has produced much unsound religious philosophy and has brought forth a spate of vaporous poetry completely out of accord with the Holy Scriptures and altogether of another climate from that of historic Christianity.

Had the apostle declared that love is what God is, we would be forced to infer that God is what love is. If literally God is love, then literally love is God, and we are in all duty bound to worship love as the only God there is. If love is equal to God then God is only equal to love, and God and love are identical. Thus we destroy the concept of personality in God and deny outright all His attributes save one, and that one we substitute for God.

The God we have left is not the God of Israel; He is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; He is not the God of the prophets and the apostles; He is not the God of the saints and reformers and martyrs, nor yet the God of the theologians and hymnists of the church.

For our souls' sake we must learn to understand the Scriptures. We must escape the slavery of words and give loyal adherence to meanings instead. Words should express ideas, not originate them. We say that God is love; we say that God is light; we say that Christ is truth; and we mean the words to be understood in much the same way that words are understood when we say of a man, "He is kindness itself." By so saying we are not stating that kindness and the man are identical, and no one understands our words in that sense.

The words "God is love" mean that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God but it is not God. It expresses the way God is in His unitary being, as do the words holiness, justice, faithfulness and truth. Because God is immutable He always acts like Himself, and because He is a unity He never suspends one of His attributes in order to exercise another.

From God's other known attributes we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, that because God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because He is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit; because He is holy, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is immense, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence and from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed.

Yet if we would know God and for other's sake tell what we know, we must try to speak of His love. All Christians have tried, but none has ever done it very well. I can no more do justice to that awesome and wonder-filled theme than a child can grasp a star. Still, by reaching toward the star the child may call attention to it and even indicate the direction one must look to see it. So, as I stretch my heart toward the high, shilling love of God, someone who has not before known about it may be encouraged to look up and have hope.

We do not know, and we may never know, what love is, but we can know how it manifests itself, and that is enough for us here. First we see it showing itself as good will. Love wills the good of all and never wills harm or evil to any. This explains the words of the apostle John: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."

Fear is the painful emotion that arises at the thought that we may be harmed or made to suffer. This fear persists while we are subject to the will of someone who does not desire our well-being. The moment we come under the protection of one of good will, fear is cast out. A child lost in a crowded store is full of fear because it sees the strangers around it as enemies. In its mother's arms a moment later all the terror subsides. The known good will of the mother casts out fear.

The world is full of enemies, and as long as we are subject to the possibility of harm from these enemies, fear is inevitable. The effort to conquer fear without removing the causes is altogether futile. The heart is wiser than the apostles of tranquillity. As long as we are in the hands of chance, as long as we look for hope to the law of averages, as long as we must trust for survival to our ability to outthink or outmaneuver the enemy, we have every good reason to be afraid. And fear hath torment.

To know that love is of God and to enter into the secret place leaning upon the arm of the Beloved - this and only this can cast out fear. Let a man become convinced that nothing can harm him and instantly for him all fear goes out of the universe. The nervous reflex, the natural revulsion to physical pain may be felt sometimes, but the deep torment of fear is gone forever.

God is love and God is sovereign. His love disposes Him to desire our everlasting welfare and His sovereignty enables Him to secure it. Nothing can hurt a good man.

The body they may kill:

God's truth abideth still

His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther

God's love tells us that He is friendly and His Word assures us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friends. No man with a trace of humility would first think that he is a friend of God; but the idea did not originate with men. Abraham would never have said, "I am God's friend," but God Himself said that Abraham was His friend. The disciples might well have hesitated to claim friendship with Christ, but Christ said to them, "Ye are my friends."

Modesty may demur at so rash a thought, but audacious faith dares to believe the Word and claim friendship with God. We do God more honor by believing what He has said about Himself and having the courage to come boldly to the throne of grace than by hiding in self-conscious humility among the trees of the garden.

Love is also an emotional identification. It considers nothing its own but gives all freely to the object of its affection. We see this constantly in our world of men and women. A young mother, thin and tired, nurses at her breast a plump and healthy baby, and far from complaining, the mother gazes down at her child with eyes shining with happiness and pride. Acts of self-sacrifice are common to love. Christ said of Himself, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." It is a strange and beautiful eccentricity of the free God that He has allowed His heart to be emotionally identified with men. Self-sufficient as He is, He wants our love and will not be satisfied till He gets it. Free as He is, He has let His heart be bound to us forever. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "For our soul is so specially loved of Him that is highest," says Julian of Norwich, "that it overpasseth the knowing of all creatures: that is to say, there is no creature that is made that may know how much and how sweetly and how tenderly our Maker loveth us. And therefore we may with grace and His help stand in spiritual beholding, with everlasting marvel of this high, overpassing, inestimable Love that Almighty God hath to us of His Goodness." Another characteristic of love is that it takes pleasure in its object. God enjoys His creation. The apostle John says frankly that God's purpose in creation was His own pleasure. God is happy in His love for all that He has made. We cannot miss the feeling of pleasure in God's delighted references to His handiwork. Psalm 104 is a divinely inspired nature poem almost rhapsodic in its happiness, and the delight of God is felt throughout it. "The glory of the Lord shall endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works." The Lord takes peculiar pleasure in His saints. Many think of God as far removed, gloomy and mightily displeased with everything, gazing down in a mood of fixed apathy upon a world in which He has long ago lost interest; but this is to think erroneously. True, God hates sin and can never look with pleasure upon iniquity, but where men seek to do God's will He responds in genuine affection. Christ in His atonement has removed the bar to the divine fellowship. Now in Christ all believing souls are objects of God's delight. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." According to the Book of Job, God's work of creation was done to musical accompaniment. "Where wast thou," God asks, "when I laid the foundations of the earth. . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" John Dryden carried the idea a bit further than this, but not, perhaps, too far to be true:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began:

When nature underneath a heap

Of jarring atoms lay,

And could not heave her head,

The tuneful voice was heard from high,

"Arise, ye more than dead!"

Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,

In order to their stations leap,

And Music's power obey.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began:

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran,

The diapason closing full in Man.

From "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day"

Music is both an expression and a source of pleasure, and the pleasure that is purest and nearest to God is the pleasure of love. Hell is a place of no pleasure because there is no love there. Heaven is full of music because it is the place where the pleasures of holy love abound. Earth is the place where the pleasures of love are mixed with pain, for sin is here, and hate and ill will. In such a world as

ours love must sometimes suffer, as Christ suffered in giving Himself for His own. But we have the certain promise that the causes of sorrow will finally be abolished and the new face enjoy forever a world of selfless, perfect love.

It is of the nature of love that it cannot lie quiescent. It is active, creative, and benign. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." So it must be where love is; love must ever give to its own, whatever the cost. The apostles rebuked the young churches sharply because a few of their members had forgotten this and had allowed their love to spend itself in personal enjoyment while their brethren were in need. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" So wrote that John who has been known to the centuries as "the Beloved."

The love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.

In Christian experience there is a highly satisfying love content that distinguishes it from all other religions and elevates it to heights far beyond even the purest and noblest philosophy. This love content is more than a thing; it is God Himself in the midst of His Church singing over His people. True Christian joy is the heart's harmonious response to the Lord's song of love.

Thou hidden love of God, whose height,

Whose depth unfathomed, no man knows,

I see from far Thy beauteous light,

Inly I sigh for Thy repose;

My heart is pained, nor can it be

At rest till it finds rest in Thee.

Gerhard Tersteegen

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 514-517)

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