



The Love of God



"The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell;
it goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled, and pardoned from his sin.

"When years of time shall pass away, and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall; when men,
who here refuse to pray, on rocks and hills and mountains call.
God's love so sure, shall still endure, all measureless and strong; redeeming grace to
Adam's race - the saints' and angels' song."

"I have loved you with an everlasting love." - Jeremiah 31:3

"Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children
of God." - 1 John 3:1

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." - John 3:16

Today's hymn has an unusual story behind it. The third stanza was a small part of an ancient lengthy poem composed in Arabic in 1096 by Rabbi Mayer in Worms, Germany. At a later time, the lines were found in revised form on the walls of a patient's room in an insane asylum after his death. It has been suggested that during times of sanity this man adapted from the Jewish poem what is now the third verse of "The Love of God":

"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, tho' stretched from sky to sky."

In the early 1900s, a Nazarene pastor named Frederick M. Lehman was so profoundly touched by the third verse, that he was moved to preserve the words for future generations. Pastor Lehman wrote the first two verses, and his daughter composed the music to what has become one of the finest hymns about the vast love of God, shown most clearly in the gift of His Son.

The second verse of the hymn applies so well to the day in which we live. Years of time have passed away, and life as we knew it is changing in ways we never would have thought possible. History has shown that earthly thrones and kingdoms have fallen according to God's providence, although their mighty leaders felt invincible at the time. Our dear nation, so richly blessed since our inception, is on the same downhill slope, and those who refuse to pray or

heed God's Word will be judged for their lack of godly rule and their embrace of sinful philosophies.

Romans 1:29-32 gives us the real reason for so much of the evil we see in the world: "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful, and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

Is this not a woeful description of the culture that surrounds us? The long and ugly list written by Paul is in complete contrast to the righteous behavior that God intended to be our standard. Anyone can see that people who act in such ways are going to create much damage to others, and to the earth itself, as they live very self-centered, arrogant lives at the expense of those around them. And the saddest part is that those who should know better because they know what God has said, follow the example of worldly people, and actually give approval to those who practice such things.

We could make our own list of atrocities as we read the news and hear the reports of evil running rampant in our world today. Our hearts break as entire cities are destroyed by foreign armies, and we are enraged by the determination of a few to destroy and control the masses. Their day of judgment will come, and these leaders will have no escape from the fury of Almighty God. For as we read in Hebrews 10:31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

But just as His holiness is sure, God's love remains, and will still endure, even as His redeeming grace is offered to those who will bow the knee to Christ now. Jesus Himself invites us to find solace in these evil days, just as He told the disciples in John 15:9-10, saying, "As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love ..."

We can scarcely begin to plum the depths of God's love for us, but Scripture calls us to walk in the light of what we do know to be true. This happens by loving Him with all of our hearts, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and praying that His love would shine upon a needy world through us in the process.