

Love - Shed Abroad in Our Hearts

by G.W. North

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and this love is the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: John 3:16, Romans 3:24, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:39, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 4:8

Topics: "God's Love", "Righteousness and Love"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes that love is the essence of God's nature and must be the nature of all His children. He highlights Paul's teachings, particularly to the Corinthians and Romans, where love is presented as supreme and essential for existence. North recounts Paul's transformative experience of receiving the Holy Spirit, which flooded his heart with love, joy, and peace, marking a total change in his nature. He also discusses the inseparable relationship between righteousness and love, asserting that one must be made righteous by God to truly love. The sermon concludes by illustrating God's careful consideration in the act of redemption, akin to the principles of purchase in life.

Transcript

Without exception all the apostles believed and taught that God is love; Paul, no less than his contemporaries, proclaimed it consistently. His other declarations about it, especially to the Corinthians, leave us in no doubt about his beliefs; he regarded love to be supreme, and taught them so, virtually saying that without love no man even exists. Since God is love, all His children must be love; love must be nature, life and disposition to every child of God. It is not surprising then that, to the Romans, he should say, 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us'. This is a most direct statement about the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit by a man who had first proved it. He rejoices in it, linking it with the act of justification, and calling it 'this grace wherein we stand'. With this love shed abroad in our hearts we hope for and anticipate the glory of God. This hope 'maketh not ashamed', he said, because of the fulness of this love and joy and peace. It was flooding his heart as he spoke, and had been doing so from the moment he had received the gift of the Holy Spirit for regeneration in Damascus.

Ananias' visit to him in his blindness had been directed by God; that dear man had been the vital human factor in the events leading up to his regeneration. Ananias had come to him and called him 'brother', saying he had been sent by the Lord Jesus that he should receive his sight and be filled with the Holy

Spirit. In obedience to that man's gentle persuasion, and as instructed by him, Saul's heart rose in faith to receive the word of God, and immediately things began to happen. In the space of a very few minutes he received his sight, his sins were washed away, he received the Holy Spirit, he had peace with God, his heart was flooded with love, he was filled with joy. He did not understand it all at once, but later he wrote of it as follows: 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God'. It had happened like that to him at the beginning. He could not have explained what happened, nor could he have taught the doctrine of it straight away, but the seeds of all he ever taught were sown in that experience. It was so comprehensive, amounting to a total change of nature whereby everything within and about him suddenly changed, and from that moment continued to change. With the coming of the Holy Spirit he immediately became a lover of God and of his fellow men. This surely is the greatest personal evidence of the power of Christ that a man can have; what he gained later from his experience that day later became apostolic doctrine.

It is important to notice the juxtaposition of righteousness and love. Their relationship is beyond question; that no one can love with the love of God unless he is first made righteous with His righteousness is not only true, it is also an acceptable and agreeable concept to the mind. There is also a logical connection between the two which, though perhaps not evident at first glance, becomes more obvious upon consideration. It would not be righteous of God to expect us to be loving except He makes us righteous -- the two must be as one. Hitherto in the epistle Paul has not spoken of love. Throughout his earlier masterly exposition of justification from sin we have been made aware of all-pervasive grace; it is this undeserved goodness of God alone which leads to repentance. He tells us also that all is based upon the redemption; justification would have been impossible without that. God first had to purchase us with the blood of His Son -- only by that could He justify His actions; what He did He did righteously.

We are familiar with the principles and practice of purchase; they are common factors of life. Purchase is based upon ability, availability, need and desire. The latter two can be operative in any purchase; on the other hand we may need to purchase that which we do not desire and, conversely, desire to purchase what we do not need. It is also possible to desire and need something which is not available to us; this can lead to frustration or fantasy. Ability, that is, purchasing power (or, as we would generally think of it, money) is a necessity we all recognize; it is entirely useless to desire anything, however needful and available it may be, unless ability to purchase it is within our grasp -- only purchasing power brings it within reach. Now, just as we have to weigh up all these things before deciding to purchase anything, so God had to take all these things into consideration before redeeming us.

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