

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#04-1042

“Love is Redemptive”

April 21, 2010

As shared in the last issue, as I sat outside under a beautiful sky, the Lord answered a question that was on my heart: **“Why did You *intentionally* allow, even expect, Adam, Your creation, to move outside Your will?”** The answer was almost instantaneous: **“Because I had to redeem My love. Love is redemptive in nature, and I had to redeem it.”**

It is a stunningly profound thought that God had to redeem Himself, His love. It is about God redeeming His very essence, as if it were something that went forth and has to return to Him, just like His word must go forth and return to Him, **for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things** (Romans 11:36). Simply, all that is of God must return to Him so that God may be All in all, and this is done by Him filling all things with the very life of His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Now, when we as Christians hear the word *redemption*, we rightly think of the work of Christ to redeem man from sin through His death on the cross. Paul wrote: **Christ, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins** (Colossians 1:14).

Further, when we consider the love of God in light of redemption, most of us have been taught that, based on the Greek word *agape*, God’s love is unconditional; that is, it is unconditional love.

The definition of the word *unconditional* is “without conditions or reservations; absolute.”

Personally, I prefer the word *absolute*, as in *absolute* love, for God alone is absolute. In our day, the word *absolute* is one of the most abused and overused words, resulting in a loss of its true meaning, which is “complete, whole; not mixed, pure; not limited; not conditional; unrestricted; not dependent on anything else.” To me, only God and what He does can be spoken of in these terms.

Well, the expressions *unconditional love* and *absolute love* are not found in Scripture, nor is the word *agape* implicitly defined as “unconditional or absolute.” We discover it in principle.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NASB)

(4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).... (Ephesians 2:4-5 NASB)

Truly, these verses speak of absolute love. We could conclude that the creation of man was an act of absolute love as well. The fact of the matter is that *but God* sums up His love for His creation and His love worked out in the history of mankind, as well as the history of the heavens and the earth.

To a large degree, *unconditional* or *absolute love* is also *redemptive love*, especially when it pertains to God “buying back” or purchasing His sons. This is discovered on two levels: first, in the narrower history of the ancient sons of Israel; second, in the grander, and yet to be fulfilled, history of the redemption of all mankind destined to become sons of God, of which the conquerors (first fruits) of the ecclesia of God will be the first to achieve sonship in God’s kingdom.

(8) For He said, “Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely.” So He became their Savior. (9) In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. (Isaiah 63:8-9 NASB)

We could say that God’s unconditional, absolute, redemptive love will carry mankind forever.

However, I believe that the word the Lord shared with me touches upon another level of God's love, perhaps even a deeper level that we all know to be true. He has purposed that His love will return to Him; that is, He will get it back, which, again, is what the word *redeem* means. One way to look at it is that the very essence of God went forth into His creation with the full intent of His love returning to Him. But how does His love return to Him? What does this look like? What does filling His creation with His love really mean in practical terms?

To answer these questions, perhaps, it is best to replace the word *redeem* with the word *reciprocal*.

Agape does not mean that God never intended His love to be expressed to Him in return or that His *agape* would never be expressed among His creation. *Agape* is sometimes presented as if it is not reciprocal, a one-way street, so to speak, but this is not true. Quite the contrary, God sent forth His love with the full intention of His *agape* not only returning to Him but also being expressed throughout His creation, one to another. This is what I believe the expression *to Him* or, as I have stated, *to Him is love* means.

We see an intimation of *to Him is love* in the Ten Commandments given to the sons of Israel: **Showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments** (Exodus 20:6 NASB), which was followed up with a more direct command: **“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”** (Deuteronomy 6:5 NASB). Jesus Himself reminded the people of the command to love (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

From a New Testament perspective, there are many comparable verses, especially as penned by John who used the word *agape* exclusively in the following verses and not the word *phileo*, which refers to brotherly or affectionate love.

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. (1 John 4:16 NASB)

(7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (8) The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (9) By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7-11 NASB)

God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16 NASB)

We love, because He first loved us. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us. (1 John 4:19; 3:16 NASB)

Love is the very essence of God, and all that He does is an expression of His love, for God is love.

God expressed His love in the creation of man, and, in turn, He not only desires but commands that that same love come back to Him from His creation. He desires to be loved in return with the same love that He has expressed in creating and, we should add, saving mankind. *Agape* demands it!

Consequently, we could say that love is to be the very heart and soul or the very nature of God's creation. God's love is to be the very fiber and essence of all creation. It is to be absolute. He first loved us, and He revealed His love through His Son; and, in turn, He expects us, that is, all mankind to love Him with a whole heart and to love one another with the same heart. It is an intense, reciprocal, redemptive, unconditional, and absolute love.

God's *agape* speaks of all creation in love with God and an expression of God is love. I do not know how else to say it with words. May the Spirit of God write it on our hearts!

More to follow...