

the decent and the wicked (Rom. 5:5-10). God's love is excellent or perfect, for He is love (1 John 4:8). He is the author of love, and He showed it by the sending of His Son to die for all. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (4:10). We learn to love because God showed us the way. Christ died for all men (Heb. 2:9). We sing about the "Perfect Love" of God for man.

Expectation

God desires that none perish, but that all men come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He is the Savior of all men, especially of those who come to know the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Out of His love, he has promised eternal life (Tit. 1:2). He expects some to obey, but He knows most will not obey. Only a few will be saved as they travel with Christ on the narrow road to heaven (Mat. 6:13-14; John 14:6). He did not conclude that all men are so wicked that there is no need in offering His love. In Noah's day, only a few were saved. Though God was grieved at the general wickedness of the day, He still wanted some to live, and they did. It is the same today.

Effectual

God's love is effective. Many are touched with the love of God and will obey the truth. It cannot be obeyed where it is not known. God's love is not a system of force, but a trait or quality of character that motivates a response, and He tells us how we can respond. We must be obedient to His instructions. We cannot claim salvation just because God loves us, but we must respond in faith, repentance, and baptism into

Christ (Rom. 6:3-5). In 2 Corinthians 5:14, Paul said, "the love of Christ constraineth us." It holds us together. Love from God, for God, and love for the brethren is a binding tie of fellowship in His love.

Enduring

It will always be there—it is everlasting or eternal. He is faithful in His promises and love and cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 10:13). His love will never leave us, and we will be blessed as long as we abide in that love. Paul said that "love abideth" (13:7). God is love, and if we dwell in Him, we dwell in that love that always endures (1 John 4:12-16).

Expressive

God has expressed His love in various ways. He does so in giving His Son (John 3:16). He does so in the giving of the Holy Scriptures that make us wise unto salvation. He does so in the many blessings that He provides for us daily (Mat. 5:45; 6:11; Jam. 1:17). All the spiritual blessings in Christ are because of God's love (Eph. 1:3). Even His love as revealed in the Scripture is an expression of His love.

Enriches

God's love enables us to enjoy true riches—the kind that endures even into eternity. Paul said he preached "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8). The Scripture speaks of the riches of glory (Rom. 9:23), the riches of grace (Eph. 1:7), the riches of Christ (3:8), the riches of wisdom (Col. 3:16), and our being rich in good works (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul wrote, "God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

The treasures of earth are not mine. I hold not its silver or gold; But a treasure far greater is mine, I have riches of value untold. The treasures of earth must all fail, Its riches and honor decay, But the riches of love that are mine, Even death cannot take them away.

Compared with the riches of love, The wealth of the world is but dross, I will seek but Christ Jesus to win. And for Him I count all things but loss.

Come, take of the riches of Christ, Exhaustless and free is the store, Of its wonderful fulness receive, Till you hunger and thirst nevermore.

Oh the depth of the riches of love, The riches of love in Christ Jesus! Far better than gold or wealth untold, Are the riches of love in Christ Jesus (H. B. Hartzler, "Riches of Love." *Sacred Selections for the Church*, 447).

Conclusion

Liberal thinkers have tried to identify the New Testament as a "love story" instead of a book of rules, regulations, and commands to be obeyed. True, the Scripture is a love story to man in that it describes the fulness of God's love for man, but it is also a book of instructions for man to keep to benefit by this love. James calls the "royal law" that which calls for love. After quoting various commands from God, Paul then stated, "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Those of us who believe in adhering to the law of the Lord to be made free from sin (8:1-3) are mocked and called *legalists*. Jesus said that if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). Will you not keep them?