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**An Unlikely Idol**

*by Evan Schaible*

In the days in which we now find ourselves, that are strangely reminiscent of the days of Noah, we have before us a deadly, yea and even treacherous, form of idolatry. Those of you who are savvy to the direction the professing church is headed, especially in America, perhaps have noticed something peculiar creep over the horizon of modern theological thought. Many a professing believer adheres to this deceptive line of thinking, and many a true believer has fallen, or is in danger of falling into the slough. As it continues to rise up over the horizon, the heat of it growing hotter and more intense, and threatening tender shoots of the truth of scripture, we must be wise to the schemes of the enemy, so that the tender shoots will grow to mighty trees of scriptural theology, and no longer be threatened by the heat of the light of heresy.

In my time proclaiming the glorious gospel of peace, and heralding the truth of scripture to thousands of college students, something very disturbing has exalted itself against the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Multitudes have been taken by this perposterous wind of doctrine, and it threatens to shipwreck many a soul as it fills their sails and carries them towards the rocky shores of heresy. But we must light the lamp, and be a city set on a hill, guiding them safely to the port of Christ. So many students, and so many other precious souls, have been taken by the smart theologian as he proclaims, above all other things we can know concerning our great and glorious Creator, that God is love.

Now is it not true that God is love? Certainly it is true, and we must believe this in order to rightly know God. God is infinitely loving, and His benevolence shines its rays upon even the darkest of rebels. The rain falls on the just and the unjust, and God, in His unparalleled longsuffering, has saw fit to restrain His judgement upon not only the wicked, but also His people, as He is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance. The love of God is past finding out, and it is deeper than the deepest sea, and higher than the highest height. It is true that God is love, but it is just as true that love is not God, and herein lies the confusion, the heresy, and the idolatry.

When the person, thinking they are doing God service, thrusts this objection in the face of the message of the justice of God, or the holiness of God, or even the cross, they are actually doing God an immeasurable disservice, and presenting God in an entirely different light than that of the revelation of scripture. In order to fully understand this we must cast our gaze to the holiest of all, where Isaiah, the prophet of the Messiah, looked in and saw God high and lifted up, his glory brighter than the morning sun. In the sixth chapter of his prophecy, we read what is called a parallelism (a repeated word), an ancient Hebrew expression that is used when emphasis needs to be placed upon something, someone, or a certain aspect of a thing. Nowhere do we read that God is good, good, good; nor do we read that God is love, love, love; but we do read the blessed words that declare God to be HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. There is none like the Lord of hosts, excellent in majesty, His throne founded upon justice and mercy, and He is entirely other, that is what it means that God is holy.

The largest emphasis in scripture is not placed upon the love of God, even though we do find in our text the phrase that God is love. But in the scripture directly prior, we read the statement love is of God, and then we read God is love. If we take this to mean what some have held up for us to believe, we are to say that God is love, and God is of Himself - or has made Himself. Now I do not in any way deny the eternity, or self-sufficiency of the Godhead, but I also am just as sure that God did not create Himself, but rather has always been. Rather, this scripture is telling us that God is the very epitomization of love, and the very embodiment of love, and love cannot be were God is not. Now it must be noted that hatred is not the absence of love, but the opposite of love, the absence of love is something I know not, but I know that the eternal lake of fire, where wicked men will burn for all of eternity, is the closest we have to a description of what it means to have an absence of love, as there is an absence of God.

Who has known such a thing, one might ask? The eternal Son, while hanging upon the cross and bearing the sin of God'

s people, writhing in agony under the wrath of His Father, undoubtedly experienced this as He cried in the very pangs of death, "my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In doing this He became the propitiation for our sins, and is now the mediator of the new covenant pleading for all who come in repentance and faith, believing that he died, and rose again for our justification. "beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

"God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us", "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son" that whosoever comes can and shall be saved, oh the depths of divine mercy, and the height of love that lies in our precious Saviour. How can anyone who has this love shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost who is given to us, not love unsparingly towards all who they meet? God is love my dear reader, but love is not God.

When any man, theologian or philosopher, exalts one aspect of God above another, he walks the edge of a cliff, and sets himself up for a very long fall if He loses sight of all that God is. God is however essentially holy and set apart. Evil dwells not with God and He is also morally perfect, righteous beyond all righteousness, and more beautiful than words can describe. God is just and will by no means clear the guilty, which is why the Son has suffered once for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. God is merciful, and the Son has risen, and all who cry out to Him, and believe on Him, shall be saved based upon the sole fact that Jesus, the spotless lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, received the chastisement that brought us peace, and can access the grace of God through faith. God is love in that He sent His Son to the earth to take the place of a guilty and rebellious people on the cross and procure for them a way of salvation while still upholding the character of God. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him".

So we can begin to see that if we neglect one aspect of God, and lose sight of even one, we begin to have a very lopsided view of Him, and are in fact walking a fine line as we could easily fall into idolatry by shaping a God that fits how we think God should be, rather than how God has revealed Himself in His holy word. Be not deceived by any means, and let no one beguile you with doctrines of men, and spoil your souls. But look unto Jesus, gaze upon Him in His word, and worship God. "I am the Lord and there is none else", and when the misled person sets up love as god, rather than seeing that God is love, they will fall into a ditch, not being able to discern their right hand from their left. So I humbly plead with you dear reader, look unto Jesus - and see Him as He is, not how you hope He is.