

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“My Jesus I love Thee...”

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I know thou art mine. These words were written in the year of 1862 by a young man who was only sixteen years old at the time. His name was William Ralph Featherstone. Little is known about him other than he wrote this hymn at a tender age, and he belonged to the Methodist Church in Montreal Canada. The hymn was set to music by Adoniram J. Gordon, who became a Baptist minister in 1863.

The United States was in the second year of the Civil War, in January of 1862, Lincoln issued a war order authorizing the Union to launch a unified action against the Confederacy, an order which General George B. McClellan chose to ignore, and was relieved of command in March. In the fall of that year, after the battle of Antietam, Lincoln took that victory as the opportunity to announce his Emancipation Proclamation.

This hymn had to have been inspired by 1 John 4:19 “We love, because He first loved us.” In reading the verse in its context to give us the dynamic setting for this selection we find in the verse prior, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, be-*

cause fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. And the verse after, If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

In examining 1 John 4:18 - 20, we come to an understanding that there shouldn't be any fear in the love we have for God. There should be a reverential attitude, but not the animal fear associated with one shrinking from the presence of God we connect with those who haven't named Jesus as their Savior yet.

The perfect love mentioned is a complete, obedient love that we should have for our Lord, knowing His sacrificial love for us. Because Christ gave his life for us, we love Him. How? “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous*” (1 John 5:3). How could any demand of the One who gave his life for us be grievous?

At the end of this set of verses we find that the Lord knows when there is a genuine love for Him and our fellow man. A

Christian who doesn't love his brethren, whom he sees, simply can not love the Lord whom he has never seen. The love suggested by these verses for our fellow man is one of heartfelt sincerity that develops in us as we mature as Christians in the cause of Christ.

In conclusion, when we are called on to sing this hymn, we should remember we have not only the scriptural obligation to love our Lord, but should have the desire also, knowing we can expect His love in return. We should praise his name in reverence, and know that he forgives us when we turn away from sin. We should remember the seriousness of the times when this hymn was written, and remember a young man probably from Canada who at the young age of sixteen put these words on paper. But most of all, we should meditate upon the ultimate and glorious feeling conveyed in the words of the fourth verse: *In mansions of glory and endless delight, I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright. I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow; if ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*