



And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

The subject of love is perhaps the most important of all to us because that is the subject around which God's Word is centered. Many have wondered, "If God is love, how can He send sinners to a burning Hell?" The answer of course is simple - God SENDS no one to Hell, those who awaken in Hell have sent themselves there through unrepented sins. God cannot look upon sin. God resides in Heaven. He will not brood sin in Heaven - PERIOD! God's love is shed abroad in our hearts, "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*" – (Romans 5:5), but all love needs some reciprocation. It must bear an echo else it misses its mark. We could not have loved God had His love not been first shed abroad in our hearts. "*We love him, because he first loved us.*" (1 John 4:19)

Today's hymn, *Love Divine all Loves Excelling*, describes in music and word-picture that exceeding love of God that came down to us and was made man in the form of His only Begotten Son, Jesus.

The hymn was composed by Mr. Charles Wesley (brother of John) while on horseback during one of his many sorties into rural England in 1747. The most popular tune to which this hymn is sung is *Beecher* by John Zundel. Other tunes are '*Airedale*' by C.V. Stanford; '*Blaenwern*' by Wm. P. Rowlands; '*Hyfrydol*' by Rowland H. Prichard; *Love Divine* by John Stainer; and '*Moriah*' a traditional Welsh tune. My personal preference is '*Blaenwern*'.

This hymn is actually a prayer as well as a hymn of praise. It pleads His Presence, His visitation, His indwelling, and His deliverance among other things.

How can we say, with absolute certainty, the Love of God is Divine? *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* (1 John 4:8) In a sense, the title is misleading for all love comes from God.

Love Divine all Loves Excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown. Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art; visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart. It was the love of God that moved Him to create the world and all that is in it; to make a beautiful garden for His first mankind. It was love that awakened Abraham to His presence; and it was His Love that God demonstrated to Abraham in testing His faith with Isaac. Abraham thereby knew better by what measure of love God would send, not some other, but His own only Begotten Son as a sacrifice. God seeks a humble dwelling, not one made with the hands of the artisan and mason, but a dwelling of flesh. He makes His abode in our hearts. Yes, the love of Christ is unbounded and immeasurable. (Like Father, like Son) His love is the kind that feels not only sympathy, but a COMPASSION that dictates action. If the heart trembles with repentance, it will be a welcome home for Christ!

Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive; suddenly return, and never, nevermore thy temples leave. Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above, pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love. Remember the Lord's Prayer that we recite, perhaps too mechanically, each worship service? *Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.* When we repeat those words, do we truly MEAN them; or, have we taken the LORD's Name in vain? We should desperately desire that the Lord Jesus Christ would come into our hearts as His Temple, and make Himself a home there. We truly are His Temple! *Deliver us from evil!* Christ is our Deliverer, and He is able! If we are IN Christ; and He is IN our hearts, we have the eternity of His life joined to our own mortal life - and we are changed! We must desire always to praise our Lord and glorify His Beautiful Name and Perfect LOVE!

Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be; let us see thy great salvation

perfectly restored in thee: changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise. Has God finished His creation in YOU? No, I am sorry to say that you need much work to reach that sanctity that Christ will bring to perfection in due course. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* (2 Cor 5:17) If you are not made a new creature from that old drab and sinful person you were from birth, then you do not belong to our Lord. *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.* (Rev 21:5) The Perfect Law of Liberty is realized when we shed these old sinful, self-wills (free wills are not free but are in bondage to the devil), and take upon us the Mind and will of Christ. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* (Phil 2:5) Here is a bit of a mystery: When we come to Christ we do not need to stop doing those things that make us happy; however, the former things that made us happy no longer prevail. Our desires change and become those that the Lord desires for us. Suddenly, we enjoy a perfect liberty that we never before experienced because we are made NEW in Christ. We were not able to change ourselves, or amend our desires - it was Christ dwelling in our hearts that made the change and the new Creation.

I like this hymn very much because it describes the one thing that mortal souls can claim as eternal - LOVE. Love is stronger than any earthly power and even survives death: *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:38-39) Please note that even DEATH cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus! If we are in Christ, and our loved ones are in Christ (or One with Christ), then we are forever together in that love though we were dead! I hope you were able to grasp that truth for it is very consoling.

Unfortunately, our 1940 Hymnal omits one verse that has great power in this hymn. I include it here: *Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit, Into every troubled breast! Let us all in Thee inherit; Let us find that second rest. Take away our bent to sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its Beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.* God at first breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, but the old man fell from grace through the sins of Eden. So man must be made anew, so God breathes a new nature into man by way of the Holy Ghost - His loving Spirit! In Christ, we inherit that which is His - Eternal Life! We come to the last day of God's new Creation in that coming Sabbath Rest. Just as the first man Adam had a Sabbath Rest at last from worldly labors, we have an eternal Rest (Sabbath) in the second Adam (Jesus Christ). The sin nature (desire to sin overtly) is taken away when we receive Christ and His will for our lives. He is the Whole Word as defined in John 1:1-4; and He is the Beginning of the Creation of God and the End of it.

He is Alpha and Omega - the first and last letter of every alphabet, and every letter in between.

Is His Name written upon the Banner of your Heart today?