The Eternal Flame

There are so-called eternal fires burning in different parts of the world today. Here in the states you have one for former President, John F. Kennedy, and you have one that burns for The Unknown Soldier. (The one at Washington Square in Philadelphia, not the one at Arlington Cemetery.) Several cities in countries throughout the world have “eternal flames”, last summer I visited one while I was in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The eternal flame goes back a long ways — all the way back to the Old Testament Tabernacle, and then eventually the Temple, where the Menorah (the elaborate candle stick holder) burned continually. Even before that, in Delphi, a flame burned continually. The flames, of course, are not eternal, but they burn continually for a long period of time. There is, however, a flame that burns continually, and it too, is a memorial for undying love. That love is God’s love, and that flame burns brightly and continually for you.

God wants you to know about this “eternal flame”, and God wants you to understand how it can never be extinguished. Let me share a wonderful verse with you. The verse is found in Song of Songs. We usually do not spend much time in that Old Testament book, because much of its romantic imagery seems somewhat archaic and foreign to our modern thoughts. While I believe that much of the book can be interpreted literally, and describes an amazing intimate and romantic love between a husband and wife (even godly arousal), I also believe that much of the book presents symbolism and allegorical pictures and teaching of Christ’s great love for His bride — the church. With that in mind, listen to these words of love from Christ to you; “Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised.” (Song of Songs 8:6-7) Wow! Talk about an amazing love, these word put to shame our greatest poets thoughts on love. Have you noticed that there are times in our lives where we wonder if our sins — many waters — have drowned God’s passionate love for us? “Certainly”, we say to ourselves, “this time my sins have quenched His love”. Have you thought that? Are you thinking that now? Has circumstances led you to believe that you are under God’s disapproval, or that your sins have caused His love-flame to flicker out? It’s easy to believe that isn’t it? But God’s love can never be extinguished. He has said; “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” (Jeremiah 31:3) He has reminded you that He loved you at your worst; “God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) God loved you before you even had a thought to love Him; “We love because he first loved us.” (I John 4:19)

What manner of love is this? No wonder the Apostle John exclaimed; “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us!” (I John 3:1) Dear friends, I am not making light of our sins, and the fact they do grieve God. But those of us who love God — by His grace — always feel we sin more than we want to, never that we can sin as much as we want to. And when we sin, yes even repeated ones, we find that God’s unconditional love burns just as brightly as before. No wonder Solomon, in a picture of God’s
extravagant love, says; “If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised.” You can’t buy love like that, and you can’t earn love like that, it can only be received. This day, this night, as you grapple with whether God still loves you extravagantly, O please hear these words – “Many waters cannot quench love” no, never! The cross forever reminds us that there is an eternal flame that burns brightly for us. The Gospel of John records these words as Jesus faced the cross; “It was just before the Passover feast, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.” (John 13:1) Please don’t ever forget that, Jesus’ love for you burns brightly, and it can never go out. Not many waters, not many sins, not many failures, not anything! He has promised.