



NO ONE LOVES YOU MORE

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Romans 2:4

There is no one who loves you more than God - no one. No one has endured more sorrow and grief or suffered greater loss because of their desire for you. No one has labored more to make a way so that you could be with them and they to be with you...to "win" your love. No one.

And when there was no way, He made a way...but it was at a cost greater than any riches could ever provide. The price had to be something greater, something eternal and of eternal value - something that would not fade away but endure for all time. And the expression of His love had to be given in such a way that all would know throughout the ages...that there should be no doubt.

God sent and "spent" His own Son. And that "Eternal Life," exceeding precious, became flesh and tasted death for every man. Jesus, His Son, humbled himself and was obedient (to His Father's will) unto death, even the death of the cross. And this, God did. And Jesus cried, "It is finished!"

It was all for love! Every bit of it was for love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3:16a). It says in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "...that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself..."

Nevertheless, it is important that the Gospel not be seen as or be reduced to a "mere declaration" of God's love. The remarkable thing about the Gospel is how God, by it, provided Himself a means by which He "calls men" to Himself. It might be good to repeat that last sentence trying to appreciate this aspect of the Gospel. God, by it, provided Himself a means by which He "calls men" to Himself - a truly remarkable thing!

Their Preaching, Did They Get it Wrong?

What do you think of the following three Scripture passages concerning the preaching of the Gospel? Matthew 3:1, "In those days came **John the Baptist**, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17, "From that time **Jesus** began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mark 6:7-12, "And he (Jesus) called unto him **the twelve**, and began to send them forth by two and two;...And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

Does their "preaching" of the Gospel surprise you in any way or strike you as being a little "old fashioned" by today's standards? They all mention repentance - don't they? But repentance is such a turn-off, you know? So let's just not talk about that - God loves us anyway, right?

But why didn't Jesus preach something more along the lines of, "Behold, God loves you, and so do I"? What kind of gospel would that have been? (Consider this a while.) And why didn't John or the twelve preach something like, "God really loves you, even when you're really bad! He loves you just the way you are!"?

Why, in the preaching of the Gospel by John, Jesus and the twelve, is there an unmistakable emphasis upon "repentance" but not so much on the love of God? Because, the keynote message of the Gospel isn't "Smile, God Loves You!"; it's "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**".

The Goodness of God & His Gift of Repentance

In Romans 2:4 it says that, "...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Repentance in a life shows the actual goodness of God at work in those responding to the leading of God. But, because men do not naturally want to repent, it takes the goodness of God working in the heart, leading men to repentance.

We definitely are living in a day however that offers variations of the Gospel of Christ; many which de-emphasize or eliminate repentance completely (the means by which God, by grace, converts the soul) focusing almost exclusively on God's love - this is why they are so popular (gospels without repentance, because God loves you anyway.) The danger of "banking" upon a "Love" or a "Live, Laugh & Love" type gospel is to lead a deceived life - robbed of any need for "godly sorrow" - 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.

But then the Scriptures warn about the perverting of the Gospel in Galatians 1:6-7, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

As in the days of the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus and the twelve, so are the days of our time. The only ones who could receive the message of the Gospel were those in whose hearts the goodness of God was at work - leading His own to the precious gift of repentance. *The gift of repentance is how the Lord gathers His own unto Himself and continues His work in our lives. You cannot be "well-pleasing" to Him without it.*

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." - 1 John 1:9-10

Is the goodness of God leading you or drawing you to give your life over to Him? Yield yourself (repent) and give yourself completely (in the baptism He is calling you to)...fall back into the water, go completely down, get completely soaking wet, lay your life down...and trust the Lord God to raise you up as one of His very own.