

HE DID IT ALL

Most times these days when someone mentions the gospel, they usually mean praying the sinner's prayer so you can go to heaven when you die and then start continuous behavior modification attempts followed by chronic repentance when it doesn't work.

I'd like to share a little personal story that I think might show the difference between this kind of religious effort and the gospel of the kingdom.

Back in about 1980, I struck up a friendship with the director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I was a Christian and a former athlete and we seemed to hit it off pretty well.

One day he called me and told me that every Sunday afternoon he shared a message at a halfway house for troubled teenagers. Many were having trouble with drug addiction, violence, and gang situations.

He said that he was given two tickets to the Houston Oilers football game to sit in one of the skyboxes and he wanted to take his son to the game. He asked me if I would fill in for him at the halfway house. And I said sure no problem.

I got to the facility a few minutes late and the guy who ran the program figured no one was going to show up and he started sharing.

I don't know if somebody pissed him off that morning or he just had a burr under his saddle but, he was emphatically telling these kids that they had to repent of all their sins and pray the sinners prayer or they were going straight to hell.

He told them they needed to straighten up their lives, become disciplined, hard-working, get rid of all their friends, start going to church and make something of themselves.

He was going at it pretty hot and heavy and these young men were totally bored out of their minds and turned off to everything he was saying.

It was a very strong presentation of the ask for forgiveness and try harder and do better gospel.

So when I stepped to the front he gave way to me.

I wanted to correct this faulty perception of God's heart for people and what a relationship with God is all about for these kids, so this is what I did.

I picked out the skinniest, weakest looking kid out of the group and I said can you step up here for a minute. I think his name was Jose.

I said Jose what if I told you I could make you the heavyweight boxing champion of the world?

He said, I only 142 lb and I could never even fight in the heavyweight division. I said don't worry about that I'll get you all pumped up and you'll make weight and be able to compete as a heavyweight. What do you say?

He said but I don't have any equipment. I said don't worry I've got all the trunks, the shoes, the boxing gloves and everything you'll ever need to be able to box. What do you say?

He said but I don't really know how to box. I said don't worry about that Muhammad Ali is a friend of mine, and he is going to come and teach you everything that he knows, to win the \$50,000,000 prize money. What do you say?

He said I've never been any good with money what if I blow it all? I said don't worry about that I've got a financial advisor who's already got it set up to invest for you and you'll never want for anything for the rest of your life. What do you say?

He said, I made my mom a promise that I'd never fight anymore. I said don't worry about that I've already spoken to your mom and she said it's okay. What do you say?

He said but what if I get in the ring and Mike Tyson knocks me out. I said don't worry about that I've already taken care of it. He's going to take a dive in the first round. All you have to do is throw the first punch.

So Jose, what do you say? He said well, yeah, sure, I'd do it.

This story that I shared with this young man is a complete fantasy and all of those possibilities are far beyond anyone's ability to make them happen.

In the Gospel of the Kingdom, all of God's actions and His results are also way beyond anyone's natural ability to make them happen.

God is the only one in the universe who can take spiritually dead people, with a nature that can only produce death, and make them New Creations, make them His children, His sons, His heirs, and Joint heirs with Christ of everything that Christ possesses.

The gospel of the Kingdom is not an ask for forgiveness and then try harder to do better religious effort.

Let me read a scripture that illustrates how the gospel of the Kingdom works.

It's Romans 8.1

Therefore, [there is] now no condemnation (no judging guilty of wrong) for those who are in Christ Jesus, *who live [and] walk not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit.*

For the law of *who live [and] walk not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit.* Spirit of life [which is] in Christ Jesus [the law of our new being] has freed me from the law of sin and of death.

For God has done what the Law could not do, [its power] being weakened by the flesh [which is the entire nature of man without the Holy Spirit].

Sending His own Son in the guise of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh [He subdued it, He overcame it, and He deprived it of its power OVER ALL WHO ACCEPT THAT SACRIFICE].

Christ sacrifice is beyond anything that we can even comprehend.

Hebrews chapters 9 and 10, declare four things that that sacrifice did for us, because of God's unchanging love for us.

It created for us an Eternal Redemption, (back into His family)

An Eternal Inheritance, (we inherit God's eternal life as our own)

Complete sanctification, (we are made Holy because He has become our Holiness)

And complete perfection (because He's perfect and He made us completely one with Him)

Man's efforts could never create any these things for us.

It's the supernatural work of God that only He can do to redeem His children back into His family. He's the only one who can do the gospel.

And He's asking us to trust in His sacrifice, His perfect work on our behalf like little kids and say, thank you Daddy. It's God's love that made all of this possible for us even before we asked.

1 John 4.9 explains that,

In this the love of God was made manifest where we are concerned: in that God sent His Son, the only begotten *and* unique [Son], into the world so that we might live through Him.

In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the the atoning sacrifice for our sins. We love *Him*, because He first loved us.

Our relationship with God is a response to His love for us.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers in chapter 3 shows even more of what God's Love actually has made available for us to possess. It shows what's available to us by letting God love us like only He can.

He prays,

May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love *and* founded securely on love,

That you may have the power *and* be strong to apprehend *and* grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];

[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [that you may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!

Jesus said, the kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman put in three measures of meal until the whole lump was leavened.

When we let this Gospel of the Kingdom into our hearts, it supernaturally affects every area of our life spirit, soul, and body.

Let's let him love us like only He can and then we can love Him back like little kids.

Let's give up our best effort to change and let Him fill us with all the fullness of God so that we become walking testimonies of His greatness out here in this world.

God bless you.

Jim Fuller

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