

Men Make God's Love Too Narrow

The trite old adage, “While there’s life there’s hope,” seemingly has influenced many in their appraisal of God’s mercy, causing them to conclude, without scriptural authority, that the moment of death for each individual of the human race marks the full end of opportunity to accept the grace of God through Christ and be blessed thereby.

This is a strange viewpoint, for all Christians are very sure that those who continue in sin and unbelief for as many as seventy-five or more years can be forgiven as readily by God as those who repent at the end of five, or even fewer years of accountable sin. Yet, as some claim, if one happens to die at an early age, God’s mercy is immediately withdrawn from such a one, consequently there is no hope of salvation for him.

It has been well said that men make God’s love too narrow by false limits of their own. That this is true is revealed by Jesus’ statement that we should forgive our enemies not merely seven times, but seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21, 22). When Jesus admonishes us to forgive seventy times seven, we must conclude that this is what He would do, and what His Heavenly Father would do, when occasion demanded. As Christians, we all know of this seventy times seven formula of Divine love and mercy, yet many are ready to cry “heresy” at the least suggestion of what they call a “second chance.”

We cannot, of course, judge the motives of those who hold to and teach views which are contrary to the Scriptures and foreign to the great fundamental attitudes of the Divine character of wisdom, justice, love, and power. It is probably safe to say that in the case of the vast majority they believe certain things because they were taught to believe them by someone in whom they placed their great confidence.

However, if we go back into the Dark Ages, through the pages of church history, and note the development of false and God-dishonoring teachings, it seems apparent that the so-called “church fathers” realized that much could be accomplished in the way of keeping the masses in line with the church by holding over them the whip of *fear*.

True, the Catholic Church does not teach that all hope ends at death – except for heretics and the willfully incorrigible – but the unhappy prospect of purgatorial suffering after death as a means of finally becoming purified has presented such a terrifying outlook that there have been few who have not been glad to take every precaution possible, even to the placing of financial burdens upon themselves and their families, in order to shorten as much as possible their supposedly necessary sojourn in purgatory.

But Protestants did away with purgatory, and lost thereby a fruitful source of revenue for their various church organizations. However, orthodox Protestantism retained the element of *fear* in their viewpoint, intensifying it tremendously by teaching that there was no provision for the purgation of sins after death – that those who die in sin are forever lost, which to most Protestant churches means eternal torture in a hell of fire and brimstone.

The Everlasting Gospel

(A very old pamphlet, with no author or date given.)

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