

God's Love – Our Love

Hebrews 4:12 [NIV] *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

The message that God's Word brings to us is two sided. The first side is to listen to what God has to say, then having listened or read we respond to the invitation from God to say something back to Him.

This is how the Word of God becomes active in our lives.

This is how we can rightly use the double edged sword, the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

When God speaks to us He uses a new language and we cannot presume to have understood it right away.

The disciples of Jesus clearly took a long wearisome time to realise what Jesus was really saying to them, for example:-

Matthew 16:24 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

For us to take up the cross as Jesus Christ did is painful and madness if we have not understood the terms on which we are invited to take up our cross.

Once God's terms are understood, the sting goes out of the pain, even though there is still a cost in our lives.

There is a tendency to expect what is offered free to be costly.

For some obscure reason we seem always to want to pay for our forgiveness, instead of saving our currency for what is really costly.

Listening to God, one side of God's Word, the two edged sword, is free.

It is the invited reply to that word that is costly.

These are the two sides to that sword.

God speaks to us in the language of love.

To be loved by God costs us nothing.

But to love God in return will be costly in our lives.

Our perverse nature would like this to be reversed, to pay for God to love us by doing things for God, and then not have to incur the cost of loving in return.

There is only one thing that God will ever demand of us, and it costs us nothing.

That is that we accept the free gift of His love expressed in the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ for our salvation, instead of trying to pay for salvation by our “good” deeds.

Anything we do to return this love is voluntary.

The difficulty is that the voluntary return of this love that God has freely extended to us, is going to be costly for us.

How is it costly to return God's love?

Romans 12:1 [Message Bible] *“Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him.”*

Paul is telling us that accepting the freely given love of God is the best choice to make. That is accepting the poured out blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ instead of our own deserved death is a wise decision.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

We can never earn our salvation, all we earn by our sinful lives is death, eternal death.

How then do we respond to free love gift from God?

Romans 12:1 cont'd [Message Bible] *“So here is what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life and place it before God as an offering.”*

That is costly!

The response to God's love is total surrender of our lives to Him to use us as He wills.

Romans 6:1-7 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.** If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that **our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**”*

Without realising it our life before accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour was a life enslaved by sin.

Our response to the love sacrifice of God, through Jesus Christ, is to die in the water of baptism [total submersion, like going into our grave] thus crucifying our old life.

This response involves great cost and pain.

Romans 6:8-14 [NIV] *“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. **In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; **and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.** For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

Once we accept the love sacrifice of God in Jesus Christ we are no longer under the death penalty that our sinful rebellion against God and His way of life as expressed in His Word, the Christian Bible, and the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:15-18 [NIV] *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! **Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you***

*are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. **You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.***”

What we do as our response to God’s love is change our master.

No longer does sin rule our lives as our master, but we have a new master who loves us beyond our full comprehension.

Romans 6:19-23 [NIV] *“I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. **Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.** When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! **But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”*

This new life under our new master may be costly but the end outcome is beyond worth, no price could ever be put on it.

How then do we conduct this new life?

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

A complete change of mind, not being influenced by this evil sinful society but being guided by God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

This can only be done with God’s help.

How does He help us?

Job 32:8 [NIV] *“**But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.**”* [**Proverbs 20:27**]

Within each human being there is spiritual dimension that cannot be seen or understood by any scientific or physiological experiment.

1 Corinthians 2:11 [NIV] *“**For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.**”*

This spirit within each human being gives us intellect, the ability to think, plan and build things out of the basic elements we find around us.

God’s Holy Spirit added to our spirit will give us understanding of spiritual things.

Without the active presence of this Holy Spirit God’s Words are foolishness to us.

1 Corinthians 2:12-15 [NIV] *“**We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.** The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.”*

Here we see how a Holy Spirit led life can renew our minds.

John 16:13, 16 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”* ... *“In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”*

Jesus personally spoke God’s Word to the disciples and will continue to be God’s spokesman through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you.**”*

Our love response to God’s Love is to love and obey Jesus Christ.

How do we love Jesus Christ?

John 15:13 [NIV] *“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

To lay down our life, that is give up our time and desires for others to benefit from our sacrificial love. Reflecting the sacrificial love we have received from God through Jesus Christ, [**Romans 12:1**].

How do we obey Jesus Christ?

John 15:12 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*

We love one another.

1 John 3:16-17 [NIV] *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. **And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.** If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”*

This love has to be a very practical love, to the point of a costly love.

As we have seen God’s Word is a two edged sword that has to be used in a certain way to make a weapon for good not harm.

God is Sovereign and as God must be the Initiator of every good thing.

James 1:16-17 [NIV] *“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers. **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**”*

God has to speak to us first through His Word, stating an eternal principle and inviting us to respond to it, this is always offered freely.

Our response which is outlined for us in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, involves a cost on our part.

Use God’s Word, this two edged sword in this way and it will be a blessing to us and bring pleasure to our Heavenly Father.

God warned humanity of this error from our very beginning.

Genesis 2:9, 15-17 [NIV] *“And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”* ... *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free*

to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Two trees, one leads life, the other to death.

Be wise and use God’s Word, this two edged sword, God’s Word, as our Creator intended.