

Redemption is for everyone

P.R. Carberry 9/26/2014

The Old Testament taught the Israelites to love their fellow man. Jesus used teachings from the Old Testament, from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, and summarized the law accordingly, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is similar: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22: 34-40) As Theologian Christopher Wright points out, "these are commands not just cheerful recommendations." The Lord expects us to show kindness and benevolence to our fellow man out of love. This may include suffering for the Lord and for the Gospel.

"Love is an act of the will which is demonstrated in obedience."¹ To act out of God's love requires obedience in action, which is essential for a right relationship with God. "Obedience flows from grace; it does not buy it. Obedience is the fruit and proof of sustenance of a relationship with God you already know."² In essence God "fashions the world with a view to creating an environment conducive to soul-making"³

We know from the scripture that creation is in bondage and is decaying due to the consequence of sin. (Rom. 8:21) God has called us to be fellow laborers in his work to redeem mankind. "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain." (II Cor. 6:1) However, it's up to each of us to decide whether or not to pursue Him and to bring comfort and love to others. Now more than ever, persecuted Christians in the Middle East and Africa need for Christians in the west to stand up and speak up for religious freedom and liberty. We are to be imitators of Christ. God offers help and guidance to anyone willing to bring comfort to others, but the responsibility lies with each person to choose to do so, or to choose to increase suffering in the world, either actively or passively, through neglect or apathy.⁴

The world is not the way that God created it and because of that, all are vulnerable to the effects of sin in the world. Why does one person suffer and another does not? Why do catastrophes happen to some and no others? It is because sin is in the world. But there will come a day when the Lord will return and cleanse this world of all sin and all suffering. C.S. Lewis described pain as God's megaphone and it can be a terrible instrument. It could lead a man to God or to final and unrepented rebellion. At the same time, it gives bad men the only opportunity they are afforded to achieve atonement.⁵ Let's pray not only for the Persecuted but also for those who are doing the persecution. Let's pray that God would remove their blindness so they can see and hear the good news of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 198.

² Wright, 193.

³ Marilyn M. Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 51.

⁴ Donal P. O'Mathuna, "'Why Me, God?'" *Understanding Suffering*, *Ethics & Medicine* 15.2 (1999): 44-52.

⁵ Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 93-94.