

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 53 – The Great Exchange

By Sharon K. Griffiee

The greatest act of love the world has ever known is when Jesus left His heavenly home to come down in human, bodily form to put away sin, once for all, by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 9:26b (NIV) – “...But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Brothers and sisters, it is important to understand that there was no guesswork here. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing, and He did it in total agreement with His Father. He clearly stated His purpose and He committed Himself to a course of action. He literally died in mankind’s place.

I Peter 3:18 (NIV) – *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

People still wonder how He could do it. Why would Jesus go to such great lengths? Why would He put up with all the mocking, the ridicule, and the excruciating torture at the hands of evil men? For the simple reason that His standard of love is far superior to human love. Jesus endured the cross because of the intensity of His love to bring you and me to God. The message of Christ to all generations, everywhere, is that *we be reconciled to God.*

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV) – *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

As we prayerfully study these verses of scripture, we can’t help but see the huge contrast Paul is making between human love and God’s love. Paul points out that the highest expression of human love, though very rare, is that a person may be willing to die for a righteous or good person. They might *possibly* be willing to offer their own life as a substitute for a good person, so that good person could continue to live out their natural life here on earth. Their thoughts indicating that a good person deserves it!

However, God’s love goes well beyond human love, both in nature and in degree. For God clearly demonstrated His own love for us by the death of His Son, Jesus. The astonishing thing to wrap our mind around is that while we were *still* sinners, Christ died for us, in our place! Through this substitution, often referred to as “The Great Exchange”, sinless Jesus was made sin (took all of our sin upon Himself at the cross) that we might be made righteous.

II Corinthians 5:21 (KJV) – *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Through this sacrificial action, Jesus (fully God and fully man) went far beyond saving the lives of good people. He died in the place of the powerless, the ungodly, the sinners; even His enemies! Yes, even His enemies. From the agony of the cross Jesus said,

Luke 23:34 (KJV) – “...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

It was at that point, speaking with all authority from Heaven, Jesus was acting in His rightful position as Mediator between God and men.

I Timothy 2:5-6 (KJV) – *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

The due time had come for reconciliation. The faithful few who were huddled together at the foot of the cross, witnessed Jesus interceding, asking His Father to forgive the very men who in their ignorance, crucified Him. There can be no greater proof of God’s love. As **II Corinthians 5:19 (KJV)** states, “...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them...”

This is the great victory, God has already reconciled Himself to man! Jesus did this by bearing mankind’s sin on the cross, making peace possible. All mankind has to do is to *trust* the reconciling work of Jesus.

But can they? Will they? Today, despite all the proof, there are those who claim to be born again, but who still question God’s great love and sacrifice for

them. Focused *inward* on self, rather than *outward* on the finished work of Jesus at the cross, they are unable to move beyond the question that torments them, “*Can God really forgive me for all the sins I have committed?*”

Anyone with this mindset who continues to go over and over past sin, has not fully accepted the pardon, the sacrifice that Jesus made at the cross. They are instead, living each day in *guilt* and *condemnation*. They are living in *unbelief*. After all, how many times does a person think they have to say, “*God, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry*”, before they will finally believe and accept the free gift of pardon, fully paid for by God’s Son on the cross?

Their unbelief holds them in bondage. Those with this mindset have allowed themselves to become trapped in a self-defeating struggle for status before God. Struggle for status? Yes, that is exactly what they are doing. They simply don’t know where they stand with God. They wrongfully believe they have to get rid of the sin, clean themselves up *before* God will have anything to do with them. Lacking solid trust in God’s love for them, it is their own feelings of unworthiness, which keeps them separated from having a personal relationship with Jesus. Because they have not understood the full significance of what took place in “The Great Exchange”, “*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (**Romans 5:8**); they have become preoccupied with their own worthiness. The problem is, anyone who tries to forsake sin, without turning to God *in faith*, will end up in failure.

We have to know we truly belong to God. We have to know that we are not considered to be an outcast by Him. We need to know we are a welcome part of God’s family. We purely and simply need to recognize that God loves us – period! That is why Jesus came! This is the good news of the gospel!

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) - *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

Brothers and sisters, it was God’s plan all along to deliver us from sin and to work a great change in us. God’s plan “**The Great Exchange**” begins by:

(1) Sending Jesus to put us in right relationship with Him, “*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (**Romans 5:8, NIV**)

(2) As we accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus *in faith*, His Grace enables us to give up sin and become righteous, as He is righteous.

I John 2:1-2 (NIV) – “*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*”

Questions for Personal or Group Study

(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

1. What is the greatest act of love the world has ever known? **Hebrews 9:26b; I Peter 3:18**
2. What is the message of Christ Jesus to all generations, everywhere? **II Corinthians 5:19**
3. There is a huge contrast between human love and God’s love. How does God demonstrate that His love is far superior to human love? **Romans 5:6-8**
4. What is the purpose of “The Great Exchange”? **II Corinthians 5:21**
5. From the cross Jesus acted in His rightful position as Mediator between God and man. What appeal did He offer up to God? **Luke 23:34**
6. Some people are unable to move beyond the question, “*Can God really forgive me for all the sins I have committed?*” Describe this person’s mindset and why it is holding them in bondage.
7. What happens if a person tries to forsake sin, without turning to God in faith?
8. How important is it to our spiritual growth, to know that we truly belong to God? **Galatians 4:4-5**
9. God does not want us to sin. But if anybody does sin, whom can we count on to speak to the Father in our defense? **I John 2:1-2**