
A Real Love Story

Wait, my friend, I have a story to tell you. It is a true story of love, service, and sacrifice. There is only one such story in this world. It has healed many a heart-ache, when nothing else could help. It has changed many a useless life into one of love and service in this sinful world. It is a source of comfort to thousands in times of sickness and bereavement, and even in death it inspires hope as no other story could do. I was commanded to tell it to you. Will you listen?

We are living in a time of trouble, fear, and uncertainty in this old world (Daniel 12:1-4; Luke 21:25-31). The love of many has grown cold, and hatred, coveteousness, and love of pleasure have made many wonder if there is a way out of it. Is there peace to be had? Does God care? Does He really love sinners today? Yes, He does, and in that love is the care for your aching heart. Only the love of God shed abroad in your heart can give you peace, great peace (Romans 5:5; Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 57:19-21). Here is the story of love.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us..." (1 John 4:10). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (verse 11). "...If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (verse 12). Would you like to have that love in you?

Do you desire to be free from those habits that keep you from obeying the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? (Matthew 22:39). "...love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10). Your heart must be changed first, for, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." (Jeremiah 17:9).

How did man's heart happen to be wicked? That is where our love story has its place. Turn and read the first three chapters of Genesis. God made man in His own image; male and female created He them. He gave them dominion over this earth, saying that they should be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. God had a divine purpose in the creation of man—a purpose of love. John tells us what it was: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God..." (1 John 3:1). Think of that great love—a creature made of the dust (Genesis 2:7) and given the privilege of being the child of the Creator. God started with Adam and Eve, the parents of the human family. For them He planted the Garden of Eden. Every tree that was good for food or pleasant to the eye was in that garden. Man needed nothing. Man was a being of choice, and in order for him to express that power, God placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden and forbade them to eat of it.

The Tree of Life was there, and they could freely have eaten of it had they been faithful to God. God told them not to eat of the forbidden fruit under penalty of death. Had man not disobeyed God he would have lived forever in the earth with

all of its Edenic beauty. No sickness, sorrow or death, no wars, no depressions and fears as we have today, would ever have come. But Adam and Eve sinned against God, and as a result the wonderful kingdom given to man on earth was cursed. "...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "...the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). "...all have sinned..." (Romans 3:23). Therefore we see that all mankind is under the penalty of sin.

When man sinned, God's Spirit departed from his heart, leaving the heart of man, by nature, wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). Only the return of God's Spirit can change that nature (Ephesians 2:2-4; Romans 8:8, 9). Since all were under the death penalty, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:...that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption" (Psalm 49:7, 9). God was not obligated to give man eternal life after sin entered. He could have let us pass through life without hope, without a chance, but "God so loved the world, that he [God] gave his only begotten Son [in death], that whosoever [that means you] believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Praise God for His love. He sent His own Son, "made of woman," into the world (Galatians 4:4, 5). Death was the penalty for your sins and mine, but, "...the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "...he was wounded for our transgressions...and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "...Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for

the unjust..." (1 Peter 3:18). "...he by the grace [love] of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

It is a marvelous gesture of love that God planned the virgin birth of Jesus to redeem man (Matthew 1). He not only planned it, but He promised this Redeemer all through the Old Testament. The animal sacrifices that Israel made from year to year for their sins could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but were a type of the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), for our sins (Hebrews 9:9, 10; 10:10).

While it is a fact that God sent His Son into the world to die for us, yet Jesus had to do it willingly. He said, "I have power to lay it [His life] down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). Even when the soldiers came to arrest Him, He could have prayed to God and received twelve legions of angels to protect Him (Matthew 26:53, 54), but He didn't. Why? Because He loved you and me so much. He would not leave us to perish. He was willing to die in our stead that "a soul so unworthy might live." Read Matthew 26th and 27th chapters and see the shame, agony, and death suffered for your sins and mine. The Son of God died the cruel death of a criminal after spending His life on earth, ministering to the needs of suffering humanity and showing them the way they ought to live. By faith in Jesus and in His death for your sins, along with repentance and baptism, you may have peace with God (Acts 2:38).

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