

God's kindness leads you to repentance— Sunday October 27th 2013.

¹³ *Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*
² *And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.*
³ *But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:1-4)*

Beloved in the Lord,

God's kindness leads you to repentance. This is a very powerful statement and we shall consider today, just what it means to say that God's kindness leads us to repentance.

The first question that needs to be raised is repentance from what? From rebellion against God. From straying off His ordained and prescribed path. From sin. One way in which theologians define sin is to say that it means to miss the mark or the target. To shoot an arrow at a target but to miss.

Every straying from God's narrow path is missing the mark. Partial obedience is disobedience. Not fulfilling God's will in all things is sin.

When we do sin, the kindness of God leads us or calls us to repentance. The Greek word that is translated "kindness" is *Chariston*. This comes from the word *Charis* which is grace. One of Martin Luther's foundation statements was *Sola Gratia* – Grace alone.

Out of His tremendous grace, God calls us to repentance. Sin is a very serious business indeed, and we should not joke about it. We read in Romans that the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). Death here means not only physically dying, but being eternally separated from Almighty God. This is the essence of hell. Praise God that Paul didn't write "The wages of sin is death!" and leave it at that. The continuation of the verse is beautiful and hopeful. The full verse reads: ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

The word translated free gift is *Charisma*. This comes from the same root word we saw earlier – *Charis* – Grace. Do you see how beautiful this is? Out of His wonderful grace, God calls us to repentance, and when we do repent, out of His wonderful grace, He forgives us.

Paul states it well in Romans 3:21-28 : ***But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His***

righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

You see, God forgives us out of His grace, not because we are good, or we deserve it, but because He is loving and gracious. He loves us. Because He loves us, He has mercy on us. In order to fulfil the righteous requirements of His own law, and yet save us from the dreadful consequences of sin, God found a way to save us. His law said that the wages of sin is death and also that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin. God took His own dear Son, and shed His holy innocent blood to pay our sin debt. How great is that?

We must never joke about sin or take it lightly, because sin is a serious matter. It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. Your sin and my sin. Paul writes:

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

So that who might become the righteousness of God? We! That is right, Jesus died on the cross, shed His blood for us. He did it because:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Because God is gracious and loving, He took our punishment and placed it upon Jesus. Jesus died in our place, bearing our guilt and sin and shame. He died in our stead.

A Divine Exchange took place at the Cross. Derek prince summed it up as follows:

Jesus was punished that we might be forgiven.

Jesus was wounded that we might be healed.

Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness that we might be made righteous with His righteousness.

Jesus died our death that we might receive His life.

Jesus was made a curse that we might enter into the blessing.

Jesus endured our poverty that we might share His abundance.

Jesus bore our shame that we might share His glory.

Jesus endured our rejection that we might have His acceptance with the Father.

Jesus was cut off by death that we might be joined to God eternally.

Our old man was put to death in Him that the new man might come to life in us.

All of this took place while Jesus was on the cross. Jesus endured hell so that we not have to experience it. He took our place so that we could be co-heirs of God's Kingdom with Him. He did it so we could share the glory and abundance of His Father.

Why did Jesus do all this for us? Because He so loved us. He had the Father's heart, a heart full of grace.

God's grace leads us to repentance.

When God The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it isn't in order to scold us or to put us down; oh no, it is to lead us to repentance. He is working to bring us back to The Father.

When we miss the mark, when we stray from God's way, His grace calls us back. He calls us to repent and to turn to Him. He calls us to Himself in order to wash us clean of all our sin. He does not desire to punish us, but to show us mercy.

This call to repentance is both on an individual as well as Church level.

Today we celebrate the Reformation. We commemorate the 31st of October 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church. These statements were not intended to condemn the Catholic Church, but to provoke discussion. Luther merely wanted to address the issues in which he believed the Church had strayed from God's Word and wanted to bring it back. The Church "heavies" were not impressed and they rejected Luther, called him a heretic, and eventually the Pope excommunicated him. This did not deter Luther, and in the power of God's Holy Spirit, he wrote, taught and preached God's Word alone and many were converted.

Reformation day is a good opportunity to do a stock take of one's own faith. It is good to do an internal audit from time to time. To come before God and ask Him if there is anything that is not right, anything we need to repent of, anything that needs to be changed.

We need to pray that God The Holy Spirit shows us if there is any sin that we have not repented of. When He does point something out we need to repent, receive forgiveness and then move forward knowing that sin is forgiven.

We read in 1. John 1:8-10:

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

You see, when we repent of our sin, when we confess our sin, then God is faithful in forgiving that sin. He washes us clean.

There is no greater feeling than to be washed clean of all your sin and shame and guilt. To be set free from all that is wrong.

When you have worked hard and are dirty and sweaty, it is great to have a refreshing shower and come out clean.

We live in a dirty world and we get marred by sin whether we like it or not. We are invited to come and wash in the precious blood of Jesus. His blood washes us whiter than snow.

Please understand that God loves each one of us so very much. His grace is calling us to Himself. He is inviting us every day to walk closer with Him every single step of the way.

This is His goodness, His kindness, His grace. He is calling us to entrust all to Him.

This day, in Latvian, was sometimes called "Faith renewal day". Today as we hear that God's grace calls us to repentance, let us take this opportunity to renew our faith and trust in Jesus. Let us come humbly before Him just as we are. Remember that Jesus said That He would no cast away anyone who comes to Him. That includes you.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.