

Sunday, May 4, 2014

The Wages of Sin

Why did God not forgive man nor did He remove the judgment of death that befell on man according to his mercy?

Why wasn't man's repentance for his sin sufficient for God?

Although God is merciful and compassionate, He is faithful in his judgment, promises and statements. The Holy Scriptures say: "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar." (Roman3:4). The expression "Truthful is the word", which is God's word, was repeated many times in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore it wasn't fit for God to remove his punishment which he forewarned Adam about if he eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. St. Athanasius says: **"The law of death, which followed from the Transgression, prevailed upon us, and from it there was no escape. The thing that was happening was in truth both monstrous and unfitting. It would, of course, have been unthinkable that God should go back upon His word and that man, having transgressed, should not die."**



St Athanasius added that repentance alone wasn't sufficient to remove the judgment of death: **"As we have already noted, it was unthinkable that God, the Father of Truth, should go back upon His word regarding death in order to ensure our continued existence. He could not falsify Himself; what, then, was God to do? Was He to demand repentance from men for their transgression ? You might say that that was worthy of God, and argue further that, as through the Transgression they became subject to corruption, so through repentance they might return to incorruption again. But repentance would not guard the Divine consistency, for, if death did not hold dominion over men, God would still remain untrue.**

Nor does repentance recall men from what is according to their nature ; all that it does is to make them cease from sinning., Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had Begun men came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case. What-or rather Who was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing?"

Here, St. Athanasius emphasizes the previous point which is that God's acceptance of man's repentance contradicts the truthfulness of his statements **"But repentance would not guard the Divine consistency."**

St Athanasius added : **"Repentance cannot recall men from what is according to their nature ; all that it does is to make them cease from sinning., Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough"**. That is to say that repentance alone cannot restore man to his original state of purity, nor does it heal the nature of man which was affected by corruption as a result of sin.

This is similar to someone who has a cold during winter because they were not prepared with warm clothing, then they go to see the doctor. Of course the doctor will treat him first and then will advise him to wear warm clothes in cold weather, treatment first then methods prevention. God didn't remove the judgment of death that befell on man, and man's repentance was not sufficient for Him because it wasn't enough for restoring man's nature from corruption. Nonetheless, according to His mercy, God took our nature through incarnation to renew it. He took the judgment of death that deservingly befell on us.

Thus we recognize that God didn't forgive man, and didn't reverse His judgment as this would have contradicted with the truthfulness of God's statements and judgments. Additionally, if man had offered repentance, it would have not been sufficient for God because repentance cannot remove the corruption from his nature nor can it renew it.

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