



March 1, 2009

An Uneven Exchange

The idea of an even exchange is a basic concept in human affairs. Trade, or bartering, is as old as mankind and the concept of value is clearly understood. Some will cheat others in trade and may fool folks for a long period of time. Recently, there were some exposed for fraud that spanned many years as they led investors to think they were doing a great and honorable work when it was all a lie. Eventually such things are discovered and when those who have been cheated find out what has happened they demand restitution and justice. God spoke of this in the law of Moses (**Lev 19.35**) and Solomon details it as something God hates. **“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.” (Prov 11.1)**. Some might admit that they have cheated someone or manipulated a situation to get what they wanted but the same individuals will go to great lengths to make sure they are not defrauded. The story of mankind and God is very similar. People expect God to save them when they die but do not take into account that this requires an exchange; faith and service for salvation. That is not to say that salvation can be earned, but there are conditions that have to be met. We don't want to be taken advantage of or cheated out of what is rightfully ours. Legal contracts and agreements have been put in place to safeguard the exchange of time, material and commodities to guarantee that all parties involved will fulfill their obligations. Why would anyone expects this to be any different with God. Take Adam and Eve for instance. God commanded a few simple things of them and only one limitation in the form of a prohibition. We all know the story and realize that God was willing to give much more than his “share” in the relationship. Without thought as to what this would do to their relationship with God, the couple ushered in the era of sin, separation and death, that now is part of the human condition. Man was told again to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the Earth (**Gen 9.1**) but wanted to change the terms of the agreement, which they had no right or authority to do. They started to build a tower to Heaven so that they would not be scattered over the earth (**Gen 11.1-4**). Of course we know

the end of that story as well as God confused their language, forcing them to scatter as commanded (**Gen 11.6-9**). Joshua warned the children of Israel to be faithful to God stating, **“If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.” (Josh 24.20)**. Everybody understands this concept but when it comes to God we somehow get the idea He does not mind being taken advantage of, that he gives “unconditionally” meaning that anything goes. The scriptures don't tell us that. Paul reminds us that the things that were written **“aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15.4)** so that we can learn by example. God has made salvation freely available but does not give it out without our having to do anything at all. That is where the misunderstanding begins. Folks think that they can do whatever comes to mind and God really loves everyone so much that he will ignore sin. After God has blessed us with the opportunity to be saved through the sacrifice of his son, do we really think we have no responsibilities toward Him? It is not that way in human affairs, nor is it. that way in the relationship between man and God. There are numerous accounts of the exact opposite, in the Old and New Testaments of this. Do we really think that sitting back, disobeying and ignoring God throughout our lifetimes is going to bring salvation to us when life ends? There are some who would explain why they think this is true, after all, salvation is the free gift of God. Yes, freely given, freely available, but not without entering into the proper relationship and agreement with the Lord. Israel, Adam, Eve, Abraham, Moses, David and the other characters in the Bible were blessed abundantly, until they sinned, and then like us, had to face the consequences. We would not tolerate that kind of thinking in our dealings with folks so why would we expect God to accept such an uneven exchange?

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