

God's Kindness Leads To Repentance

■ Overcoming disbelief that we have abundant life

From Steve Backlund's book "Victorious Mindsets"

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"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Romans 2:4

God is not angry with us. He has already released His wrath (anger) on Christ at the cross. However, if we believe that God's plan is to primarily motivate us by His displeasure, then it will be difficult to move toward Christian maturity.

Romans 2:4 tells us that the goodness of God will lead us to repentance. (Other versions say it is the "kindness of God" that leads to this repentance.) Many believe though that our repentance leads to God's kindness, not the other way around.

What do we say then about the many biblical passages (especially in the Old Testament) that seemingly reveal a God whose anger is not appeased until there is a change in behavior? Obviously space does not allow for a detailed theological discussion of this, but let me give you an idea to consider.

Imagine a young teenager caught smoking by his parents—parents who greatly desire that their child succeed in life. This father and mother know he is not mature enough to understand the intrinsic dangers of smoking; so they might say something like, "If I ever catch you smoking again, you don't have to worry about tobacco being the thing to kill you." This fear of "wrath" can motivate him to proper behavior, but the parents are also working on their relationship for a more mature response in future situations.

Understanding God's kindness and goodness will cause us to want to pursue a relationship with Him that will change us from the inside out (because we will be responding from love rather than fear.) This relationship will ignite us to the abundant life that Jesus promised (John 10:10). We will no longer be focused on performance, but rather on experiencing newer and deeper dimensions of our heart connection with God (His kindness). This will change our behavior like nothing else will.