**NOW THAT’S LOVE**

***The Prince and The Princess***

Students of the Bible, as well as those of ancient history, have likely heard of the legendary king of Persia named Cyrus the Great. God had foretold his birth and reign over 100 years before his birth (study Isaiah 44:28 – 45:3). God also used him to build the Persian empire and release Israel from captivity and return them to Jerusalem to rebuild the city (study the book of Ezra and 2 Chron. 36).

But there is an extra-Biblical reference to Cyrus that speaks to his character I recently read in an excerpt from a book called *The History of Iran*. The author referenced the famous ancient Greek historian Xenophon. I want to share that short story and make an application that might interest you.

In Cyrus’ conquests to build the Persian empire he took his army to Armenia. The king of Armenia had rebelled against him and so he was seeking to capture and punish him. The king had tried to escape but was captured. He stood trial and it seemed certain he would be executed. Suddenly his son, Prince Tigranes, who had once gone on a hunting expedition with King Cyrus, rode quickly to the trial in order to intercede for his father. Tigranes beautiful wife Armenuhi came with him. Cyrus had remembered Tigranes great mind as a philosopher and gentleman and had liked him. The young Prince gave a powerful defense on behalf of his father. Cyrus, amazingly, asked the young man what he would be willing to give up in order for him and his father to be restored to the throne. The Prince replied that he valued his crown and his freedom at a very low rate, but that if King Cyrus would only restore his beloved wife to her former dignity and give her the possessions that would make her comfortable, he would gladly sacrifice his own life and soul.

Cyrus was so moved by this that he mercifully forgave both the King and Prince of their transgressions and restored them to their place of royalty. When they all returned home Prince Tigranes asked Armenuhi, “Tell me, my Armenian princess, did you think the great king Cyrus handsome?” She replied without a moment’s hesitation, “Why, by Zeus, I did not look at him.” This startled the Prince and he said, “At whom then did you look?” She replied, “At him who said that he would give his life to keep me from servitude. I observed only that dear and generous man who declared his readiness to purchase my liberty at the expense of his own life.”

Xenophon told that story about 300 years after the fact so I sure hope he accurately got the details of that love story right. If not, like Tony Wilson once said, “when forced to pick between truth and legend, print the legend.” It seems the stuff of legend that Disney might use to produce a major motion picture of yet another Prince and Princess.

But I don’t want us to choose between truth and legend, but to choose both. There is the real true-to-life story of a Prince who not only offered to give his life for the freedom of his bride, but actually did so. Of course, you know Who I’m talking about, don’t you? I’m talking about our Prince, who, without any hesitation, offered Himself for our freedom. When we, who were guilty as charged, stood to be executed for our crimes, the Prince of Peace revealed His love by a divine demonstration unequaled in all of history.

*6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6-8).

If you can put yourself in the slippers of Princess Armenuhi and imagine how she felt at that heroic moment when her husband stood before a powerful ruler of the world and offered his life for her freedom, then multiply that by the power of 10, you will possibly come close to how the 3000 souls on Pentecost felt when Peter revealed they had murdered their Messiah, the King of Israel, the Son of God. They were walking dead men, guilty of history’s greatest crime. But when Peter told them of heaven’s Savior that was now willing to offer them “*the forgiveness of sins,*” along with a bonus of “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Ac. 2:38), they felt loved beyond belief. On that grace-filled day 3000 souls “*gladly received His word”* and immediately *“were baptized*” (Ac. 2:41).

If we could interview those thousands of happy people they would talk of Jesus like Princess Armenuhi spoke of Prince Tigranes. On that day, and for the rest of their life, they only had eyes for Jesus. He had set these captives free by offering Himself as a substitute for their sins (Matt. 20:28). From that day forward they felt as Paul did, “*it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me*” (Gal. 2:20). Their love for Jesus knew no bounds. He who had given His life for His bride (Eph. 5:25), was now the object of their undying love (Eph. 5:33).

Like Armenuhi, we no longer see the fool’s gold of the world, but only have eyes for Jesus.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in His wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace”  
-- Helen H. Lemmel

Jesus loves me this I know. – Rick