

The myth of Prometheus

“The Titan who loved men more than himself”

Many years ago, according to the stories told by the people of ancient Greece, there lived two brothers who were not like other men, or like the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus. They were the sons of the Titan Iapetus and Clymene, one of the Oceanids.

The name of the elder of these brothers was Prometheus (which means Forethought). Prometheus was always thinking of the future and making things ready for what might happen tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or even in a hundred years time.

The younger was called Epimetheus (which means Afterthought). Epimetheus was always so busy thinking of today and never worried at all about what might come to pass in the future.

Prometheus did not want to live amongst the clouds on Mount Olympus. While the gods were spending their time in idleness, drinking nectar and eating ambrosia, he was planning how to make the world wiser and better than it had ever been before.

So instead of living on Olympus, Prometheus went out amongst men to live with them and help them.

He quickly noticed that they were not happy. He found them living in caves and in holes of the earth, shivering with the cold because there was no fire, dying of starvation, hunted by wild beasts and by one another—the most miserable of all living creatures.

One day Prometheus said to himself "If they only had fire, they could at least warm themselves and cook their food; and after a while they could learn to make tools and build themselves houses. Without fire, they are worse off than the beasts."

Prometheus went to Zeus and asked him to give fire to humans, so that they might have a little comfort through the long, dreary months of winter.

"I will not!" said Zeus, "Not one spark will I share with them!"

For, if men had fire they might become strong and wise like us, and after a while they would drive us out of our kingdom. Besides, fire is a dangerous tool and they are too poor and ignorant to be trusted with it."

Prometheus didn't answer, but he had set his heart on helping humanity.

"Humanity shall have fire, despite what Zeus has decided," he said to himself. And with that thought, he snuck quietly into Zeus' domain and stole a spark.

When he reached home, he called some of the shivering people from their caves and built a fire for them, and showed them how to warm themselves by it and use it to cook their food. Men and women gathered round the fire and were warm and happy, and thankful to Prometheus for the wonderful gift which he had brought to them.

«At that time the life of human beings has been changed forever»

One chilly winter evening, Zeus gazed down from Mount Olympus and noticed fires burning cheerfully in every village across the land. He realized that Prometheus had disobeyed him and given fire to men.

Zeus was very angry. He decided to punish both humans and Prometheus.

The punishment for Prometheus was to remain chained to the side of a mountain to suffer there forever.

As a punishment for humans, he ordered Hephaestus to create the first woman, who was named Pandora which means "all gifted.", because all the Olympian Gods gave her a gift.

Zeus also gave Pandora a jar full of every kind of possible disasters. However Hermes, as an act of charity towards humanity, he placed hope inside the jar. Zeus warned Pandora never to open the jar and sent her to live among humans. However, because of Pandora's being really curious, she did open the jar after all. Then all terrible things jumped out of the jar and started to torture humanity.

Prometheus stayed chained to the mountain, thinking of the future, happy in the knowledge that he had given fire to men. Until one day he was rescued by Hercules, the mortal son of Zeus... But that is a story for another day!