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“Good News” of Victory

By Dave Leach
If you care about evil in the world

The Gospel [Greek: “Good News”] is *not* that Jesus died to appease a God so “holy” that He would otherwise be forced to throw you into Hell to keep you from contaminating Him.

“Holiness” is never defined in the Bible as inability to survive the presence of sin. God will not melt into a puddle at its touch, like when the Wicked Witch of the West got wet.

That was the Pharisee’s definition of “Holiness”. They demanded of Jesus, “*Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*”

Jesus answered that mingling with sinners, to call them to repentance, doesn't make Him unholy any more than treating patients makes a doctor unhealthy. Luke 5:30-31.

God is no less able to survive intimacy with sinful men than Jesus! God has no problem being generous to the worst sinner.

This is clear from Job 1 where God praises a mere man! God is not so “holy” that He can find nothing in man to appreciate! When Jesus returns, He will publicly reveal the intent behind every word and deed, “*and then shall all men have praise of God*”, 1 Cor 4:5!

God even tries, in Job 1, to engage *Satan* in a friendly conversation! It’s *Satan* who prays for a cruel test to prove the man is as phony as he is - and God *generously* indulges him!

In a bit I will explain how God used Satan's cruelty to bless the man, showing how God gives limited liberty even to the wicked, up to the point where it will not bless the innocent.

God’s News is so good that if you reject it,

it won’t be because you can’t see how good it is. It will be because you don’t believe how much good God says *you* can accomplish. Or it will be because you truly won’t lift a finger to lessen anybody’s suffering besides your own. But if you are an average guy who cares that others suffer - who is troubled by the evil in the world - who yearns to understand why a God of Love allows it, here is the good news:

You, yes you, sinful finite faithless insignificant little you, can correct the evils in the world which trouble you! God *will* help you do it, and “*with God all things are possible*”, Mark 10:27!

Hard to believe, right? That’s nothing:

Mark 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Theologies that Justify Christian Failure abound. One is “*we are not called to be victorious, but faithful.*” Mark 11:23 was written accidentally. Also Mat 21:21 and Luke 17:6.

Another is “*God always answers prayer, but sometimes His answer is no.*” This turns plain words upside down to mean if you never see victory, you can rejoice that it was God’s will for you to fail.

The theology that God sometimes answers “no” is based on Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh*” which he prayed three times for God to remove before God explained why He shouldn’t. 2 Cor 12:7-12. So even that one single time where a righteous man’s prayer was refused offers hope that God will at least let us know if we are moving the wrong mountain, so we can start pushing the right one. We needn’t sit placidly around, just waiting for death to take us away from all these evils which God will make us forget, because we have no way to know what we can do for Him that He will help with.

A third excuse not to expect victory is saying “*it must not have been God’s Will*” at the setbacks of life so it is OK to give up and watch TV; or *praying that God will do His Will*, while we watch TV. This is an attitude of Hell according to Mat 25:24-30. God wants our involvement, James 2:14-26. But God’s Will *is* to answer good prayers! Not just pre-approved prayers! God invites us to be creative when we pray. It was *Peter’s* idea to walk on water, Matthew 14:29. All Jesus said was “*come*”. Even when God isn’t crazy about what we ask, Luke 11:8 welcomes “*importunity*” [annoyingly persistent demands]: God dotes on us, anxious to spoil us as much as any parent his child. Elijah had no more inside track than we do, according to James 5:17. God didn’t tell him what to pray for, any more than He told Peter to ask if he could walk on water. But Elijah cared so much for the evil of his generation, that He begged God for 3 years of no rain, believed - however desperately - that God would answer, and used it to end worship of a cruel rain god.

Reasons Prayers Aren’t Answered are common sense. Wronging our loved ones makes us the evil which they pray to be removed, which will “*hinder*” our own prayers, 1 Pet 3:7. Causing divorce, thinking God will tolerate *our* evil, causes God not to “*hear*” us, Mal 2:13-17. Prayer to “*consume it upon your lusts*”, James 4:3, apparently meaning to think only of yourself, Luke 6:30-32, won’t satisfy. If you pray for one thing and do the opposite, you won’t “*receive anything of the Lord*”, Jas 1:7. The key to self discipline is to want something so much that to stand in its way becomes unthinkable.

God Gives Good, when we ask! James 1:5, Luke 11:13. Prayer focuses our vision on good, for the same reason children know better than to ask parents for harmful things.

God wants you to pursue victory over evil, in hope. Not just victory over tiny evils, but

victory over *as much evil as you are willing to focus your energies and prayers upon.*

Matthew 17:20 describes the amount of faith needed to make this happen “*as a grain of mustard seed*”, which Mat 13:32 describes as “*the least of all seeds*”. I used to think, since no one orders mountains into seas, that human giants of faith, by my standards, must, by God’s standards, have faith even *smaller* than a mustard seed!

Victory takes Time. But history is full of heroes taking on impossible odds, and winning. But victory often takes a lifetime.

William Wilburforce learned on his deathbed that his decades of pleading finally persuaded England’s Parliament to outlaw slavery. Many missionary stories follow the same plot.

Jesus didn’t say the mountain would jump into the sea *instantly*. In fact, Jesus didn’t conclude His ministry instantly. He took 3 years, and prepared for it 30 years, after waiting 4,000.

God is finishing a 6,000 year project. Daniel 2 foresaw four world tyrannies toppled by a “stone...cut out of the mountain without hands”. They vaporize as the stone grows to replace them. But not all are tired of tyranny.

What displaces tyranny? Freedom.

Consider the theologies of freedom only in the Bible: (1) *all* human life is sacred, created in the Image of God, Gen 1:27! (2) God’s Heroes of Faith, Hebrews 11, included ordinary praying civilians, James 5:17, who gave their lives criticizing their governments - inspiring our First Amendment Freedom of Speech! (3) The Bible condemns slavery as we know it, making the stealing of a man a capital offense, Deut 24:7; capping contracts to repay debt by servitude at 6 years, Deut 15:18; and not allowing harsh physical treatment, Ex 21:26. Philemon, a book of the New Testament, is a plea for a Christian to free his slave. 1 Cor 7:21-22 urges servants to become free if

they can. Col 3:11 topples theologies of inferiority with U.S. civil rights law in a sentence: *“there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”*

God’s Stone has slowly spread, building hospitals and schools, preserving libraries, mitigating really barbaric cultures, and purifying itself along the way until Bible study dared the Pilgrims to create a government in which *all* participated in elections, with freedom of speech to discuss their corporate vision without coercion to agree with their leaders! Their Freedom spread across the U.S., whose light began toppling Earth’s tyrannies!

Fixing Evil Starts with You. Not that Christianity’s ugly moments stand out against its pagan contexts, but any parent’s standards are as high as their children can reach, so God orders judgment to *“begin at my sanctuary”*, Eze 9:6, Rom 2:24. So as we pray against others’ evil, let’s not overlook our own. Mat 7:1-5, *“cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”* As we cry for cruelties between strangers, let us cry for our cruelties to loved ones! Let’s let God answer the prayers, of those *we* hurt, to end *our* evils!

Sin is Not Some Good which God hates because it makes us happy! The Greek word ἁμαρτία means “to miss the mark”. It means our *own* mark (target), since we can’t “miss” a target at which *we* do not aim. In other words, failure pleases God as little as it pleases us!

Yet God uses the word “sin” to describe people sinning deliberately. A child who sticks a fork in the electric outlet deliberately, in violation of his parents’ strict commands, is missing his *own* target. He expected adventure, not the shock of his life. What we think makes us happy, which doesn’t, God calls “sins”.

Example #1: Sexual sins are thought to

make sinners the happiest, yet they are attended by ruthless diseases, and heartbreak because promiscuity is routinely clothed in deceit. It doesn’t even beget sex as often as marriage!

Example #2: you who eat only plants because you reverence even animal life (though not plant life) but freely kill your own child in the womb without emergency, are you really sure you have nothing to learn from God about the world’s evils in your cross hairs?

Example #3: Jesus warns His followers, *“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”* Mark 8:38.

But our culture is determined to shame Christians who quote God in political forums. Is not politics where we as a people reason together about what is evil in the world, and what we together should do about it? If we are not all free to argue from the highest principles we know, how can we reason together? Can there be any greater tragedy in the world, than for sincere efforts, to correct the evil in the world, to cancel each other because we won’t reason with each other about what is evil?

Sin is Shooting Yourself in the Foot and then blaming God for suffering!

Do you think God adds pleasures to His list of sins to honor Himself in some way? To satisfy some ethereal image of “holiness”?

Job 35:3-8 You ask, “What’s in it for me to not sin?” God answers, “Who else do you think your sin hurts? Me? Your sin shoots your own foot. Your love helps humans.” (Paraphrase)

God doesn’t want us to pray “hallowed [Holy] be thy name” for *His* benefit, but for ours! He doesn’t want us to be failures! Do you think He grieves for all the evil in the world less than you? He yearns for you to partner with Him in cleaning it up - beginning with your

own unintended cruelty to others!

God wants, so seriously, for you to weep for the sins of your land, that He looks for that in deciding who will fit in Heaven. Ezekiel 9.

God’s vision is not for us to create a Heaven on Earth by our own efforts, and then leave it for a Heaven made so complete by His efforts that nothing remains for us to do there. Luke 19:12-27 describes earth as a place to develop success-breeding, resource-doubling work and learning habits, to prepare us for as much more responsibility than we have here, as adults are given more than children. If you won’t learn or work, you won’t like Heaven. Mat 25:24-30.

God wants us to “fear” Him, Ecc 12:13, in the same way we “fear” electricity if we violate its rules. God doesn’t want us *living in fear*, like Job. Job 3:25 says all the time he was the most powerful man in the world, Job 29, he was afraid the very thing would happen, which did: that his faith would be tested. The fear that he would then doubt God was articulated in chapter one by Satan, riding wings of doubts mingled with the prayers of saints.

“The fearful and unbelieving” fill Hell, Rev 21:8. How can God deliver a man from stubborn terror? Only by putting him through what he fears so he can learn that with God, there is nothing to fear! With God is joy!

We are not “Cursed” through Adam. Adam wasn’t cursed! Gen 3:17 says *“cursed is the ground for thy sake”*. Adam refused the labor God assigned, so God created hunger to compel minimal labor, because *“There is nothing better for a man, than that he should...make his soul enjoy good in his labour.”* Ecc 2:24. Even that curse does not affect those who accept the labor God assigns! Mat 6:31 *“...take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?... 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Not that we need not work. But if we

“first” do God’s work, God will help us.

Don’t blame Adam! Jer 31:30 *“...every one shall die for his own iniquity”*. We have the same choice Adam had. Rom 5:12-19.

God Came to pour love on the evil in the world. He came to personally hand-deliver His promises to help us win Victory. He came close enough for us to reach out and touch Him, *and kill Him*, which we did, and still do by silencing His witnesses. This shows God’s love for us, and our need for it. It shows the hostility to any who would heal evil in the world. It underlines the cost we must accept if we dare try.

No wonder some accept such cost! It is for Love like none other. John 15:13 *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* Such love moves us to sacrifice in return, which we find more fulfilling than all we had previously desired!

Little satisfies like Truth’s victories. When none can refute it, but only silence it, it is confirmed as so good, and its enemies so evil, that Life for so noble a cause seems well spent.

Cure for Apathy. Isn’t this news good? I pray what you want to go away is the evil in the world - not just your responsibility to oppose it!

Love moves us to help when reason says we can’t. Apathy says we can’t, when God says we can. God medicates apathy with “double” what we dish out to others, Rev 18:6, Ex 22:4, 7, 9, including what we could stop if we cared, Eze 3:18-20. But in love, Heb 12:6-7. We “pay” that “debt” if we won’t pass on God’s kindness, Mat 18:21-35. If we can turn from God, Love, Light, Life, and Truth for even a moment, what will make it impossible to turn away forever?

Please join us. We need your help. God is anxious to do miracles through us, working together, Mat 18:20, as we reason together about what is evil, and how to remove it.

Questions? Comments? Help?
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