



April 26, 2024

Good and Evil
Part 4, The Deadline

This month we've been musing about the "mysteries" of good and evil, a topic that has caused countless generations to puzzle and question.

We started with Part 1, The Dilemma. One of the hardest things for the natural (i.e., non-spiritual) man to rationalize is the very real presence of evil in this World system!

In Part 2, The Desire, we discovered that mankind's desire was his downfall. Eve exercised her free will, she rebelled against her Creator, Adam followed, and we've been living in a mess ever since! But God also had a desire, a desire to rescue humanity from their foolish choice and the consequence of rebellion. Eve's desire brought disaster, but God's desire brought deliverance through the sacrifice of His own Perfect Son, Jesus the God-Man.

In Part 3, The Doubt, we talked about the common question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" But we discovered that this question is flawed on both ends! Until we see the end of the matter (1 Corinthians 4:5) we can't judge what is bad and what is good. And second, there are no "good" people. Jesus said, *...there is none good but one, that is, God* (Mark 10:18). Paul seconded that motion when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote, *...there is none that doeth good, no, not one* (Romans 3:12).

And now we will close this month's study of Good and Evil with Pt. 4, The Deadline.

As much as humanity wants to question God, argue about good and evil, and in so doing absolve themselves of their own guiltiness, there comes an eventual reality check, a reckoning, a deadline. I'll call it the **Personal Deadline**: the death of our physical body. The Hebrews author warned, *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...* (Hebrews 9:27). When our soul and spirit leave our body at death, **our eternal destiny is fixed**. And the Bible is plain; there are no second chances, regardless of what "religion" tells us! Solomon taught this austere reality in poetic form in Ecclesiastes 11:3, *...if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it*

shall be. In the Luke 18 account of the unnamed rich man and the beggar Lazarus, we discover that at the instant of death, each person was transported directly to their eternal destiny. There were no purgatories or limbos; there was no chance for a pardon, or for penance, or for indulgences. No matter what some religious authority tells us, God says that the unrepentant rich man was instantly in torment in that place the Bible calls Hades or Hell (a holding cell for the final prison called the Lake of Fire). And the repentant beggar Lazarus was instantly enjoying comfort and joy, in a place that Jesus called Paradise. Forgiven Lazarus will come back with Christ to this Earth, He will enjoy ruling and reigning with Christ in the literal 1000-year Kingdom, he will witness the re-creation of this sin-cursed Universe, and then enjoy living on a New Earth forevermore.

The big question of life then, is not the mystery of Good and Evil, where they came from, or why our consciences innately know about them... but how God judges as either good or evil! Yes, at that moment, at the last beat of our hearts, we will either inherit God's goodness (grace) or God's judgment. Receiving His grace has absolutely nothing to do with what we can DO in life, how "good" we have been, or how many "good leaves" we have turned over. We can't do enough good to pay for our sins! We can't earn God's forgiveness. We are spiritually dead because of our sins and dead people can't do anything! Penance isn't possible. We can't purchase indulgences from religious organizations. If we could somehow earn or buy Heaven, then Christ didn't need to die in our place!

Friends, we can only access God's grace by accepting God's FREE GIFT of forgiveness. Again, it has to be free because it's not possible to earn it. But it's not cheap! It cost God dearly! The Son of God incarnated Himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Perfect God-Man. Jesus lived a perfect life and sacrificed Himself as a perfect sacrifice. He died in our place, the Just for the unjust.

And so, the real question is somewhat like that asked by Pilate some 2000 years ago: What shall I do with Jesus (Mat 27:22)? We appropriate God's forgiveness as did the praying publican and the thief on the cross by crying out to God in contrition and repentance asking for his forgiveness and grace (*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* – Romans 10:13). THEN God will apply the precious blood of Christ to our sin-debt, washing us as white as snow. God pleads with humanity through His prophet Isaiah, *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool* (Isaiah 1:18). If we have cried out to God in repentance and faith for His forgiveness, then He will apply Jesus' righteousness to our account and our sin debt will read, "Paid in Full!" The Lord is, *...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

Friends, a deadline awaits us all and it always comes unannounced and often suddenly. At that last heartbeat, we'll be accounted righteous THROUGH Christ or we will remain as guilty sinners separated eternally from God because of our unwillingness to repent and believe, and consequently, we will pay for our sins eternally. Don't put it off. Take advantage of God's goodness and grace TODAY!

God bless and consider!