



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,



I recently heard a famous pastor in a TV interview sadly tell of members in his church who angrily confronted him after he preached a message simply titled 'God is Good.' His church is in the mainstream of spiritual renewal. The people who came at him were not baby Christians. He said some of them were what he would have considered mature seasoned leaders. But his message of God's goodness had evidently hit a sore spot. Their arguments against his sermon were not logical. They were not well thought through or nuanced. They were the emotional reactions that come from that deep place inside we all have at times, where logic and reason are not allowed. This dark place is where we refuse truth, passively accept contradictions, and reconcile it all by calling nonsense 'mystery.' Well, there IS mystery. But mystery is not nonsense. We all must be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to open up these places and pour in the Light. (Ephesians chapters 1 and 3)



The following is a response I wrote in a recent letter concerning the existence of evil. I hope it will help at least to begin the inner conversation needed to free us from any confusion. If God cannot be trusted to be good, then the inner contradiction we carry inside us will only remain stable until our own personal lives are hit by adversity. Then our inner crack will become a deep fissure and an earthquake of reality will force us to decide if we really do trust God or if we simply carry a fantasy god on our insides. It is a good thing to be made aware that we only know and trust God on a certain level. It is a painful but still good thing to be awakened to the false view of God we may tolerate and become healed of it. As C. S. Lewis once wrote, "May it be the real me who prays, and may it be the real God I pray to."

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Evil is not a created thing. Evil is the negation of creation, not a creation. Everything that happens does not happen for a 'reason.' If it does then God would have to be insane. He did not create love then create hate to counter it. Hate is the absence or negation of love. Free will is necessary for love to exist. And free will makes room for many sorrows. God turns bad things for eventual good creatively, but He does not 'send bad things' just to keep life interesting. He is not Zeus.

Our freedom is real but limited. We didn't freely choose to be born where we were born or who we were related to. But we can freely choose many things in relation to our life of predetermined limits. I think of one who was born to great riches and privilege for instance who like a British royal, seems to have every advantage yet suffers from many limits put upon him by his birth. He is 'free' yet he is not. He can make some choices but others are put on him.

But all our lives are to some degree a mixture of freedom and non freedom. God works IN that mix if we let Him. But for me, almost all my deepest pain has been caused by my free choice to try to find happiness on my own terms my way. God rescued me out of that over and over. But so much of it was unnecessary pain. It was meaningless in itself. It was meaningful because it helped me learn. But evil is not a necessity factored into creation. It is the negation of creation. Evil spirits are certainly behind much evil. But human freedom sets their stage for them to act on.

The Mystery of the Cross is where God Himself as a human, allows human and demonic evil to do its very worst to Him, and then He rose from death to show that love still wins. To trust HIM at that cross is to destroy the ultimate work of evil in us. So even though we battle and fail and fight and sin and sorrow, Jesus has conquered evil at the Cross, and will someday (soon I pray) come to bring it all to its conclusion.

The ongoing war with evil is like D Day vs. VE Day. Every historian says D day was the conclusion of the war: the decisive irreversible overthrow of the axis powers. But many suffered between that day and the final 'end' of the war on VE day. The Cross was D day for evil. We battle until VE Day. But the decisive destiny for us was settled at the cross no matter how badly we mess up or fail on our way to VE Day. Because of HIM we win. We do not win on our own. Grace saves us, not our wisdom or good performance. THANK GOD!

It might be understandable for someone to respond by asking, "But some things seem SO utterly evil, how can it ever be put right?" So the disciples must have thought from Gethsemane to the dark cold tomb. They just could not imagine what was about to happen. As Jesus whispered to Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." In this truth we will find the power to face whatever comes, whether in our personal lives, or in the conflicted planet as a whole. So don't let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. For God is all good. God is love. Rest your heart in Him.



A Reading List on Grappling with the Question of Evil

There have been more words written on the subject of evil than any other philosophical struggle. Here are a few titles I especially respect that will help you if you desire to pursue more:

Unspeakable by Os Guinness

Deliver Us from Evil by Ravi Zacharias

Evil and the Justice of God by N. T. Wright

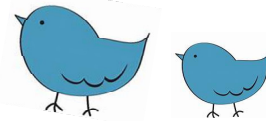
The Goodness of God by John W. Wenham

The Problem of Pain by C. S. Lewis

The Doors of the Sea by David Bentley Hart



Closing Thoughts...



I continue to make slow but solid progress towards full recovery. Mornings are really good for me and that's when I get most of my work done. By mid afternoon I am not so chipper, but that too is getting better. I simply cannot do the hours I was doing or see many people. And not seeing people is the really hard part to adjust to. I love praying with people and helping them get free. But I seem to have the unhealthy habit of carrying them inside me. And my heart refuses to carry that weight any more. So Mary and I must wait for new orders. Pray for us to hear clearly. You are directly a part of all we do for the Kingdom. Your prayers are greatly appreciated and needed.



In His Hands,
Clay & Mary



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