**Easter Thought for A Skeptic - Reconciliation to Sin (LENIENT PROGRESSIVE TEACHING PERSPECTIVE)**

March 31, 2013 at 12:17pm (REVISED AFTER THIS DATE FROM FACEBOOK)



If all fall short as sinners (**Romans 3:23)** then it is unavoidable and in our nature to do so. Why then is it our fault for sinning and why does it matter Jesus had to die for our sins? If God "*knew the end before the beginning*" then He knew Adam and Eve would be tricked into eating the forbidden fruit, allowing sin to enter into the world correct? Why then do we get blamed for sinning since it's unavoidable and in our nature to do so?

            ---Now as the Book references in regards to initial sin and forgiveness;

*"****Therefore, as one trespass led to the condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads* *to justification and life for all men."***

A covenant of righteous reconciliation from Creator to created was established in regards to this sin through the death of Jesus, so that a hierarchy of control could be set up through a concept of Faith in a leader who has been, and is to come.  To learn faith is to learn to trust in an infinite God who knows the next best steps in our progression.

***"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."***

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  *"****Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"***

If life was simple and fair, there would be no need for Faith in anything but ourselves since everyone would be the exact same. As we all know, the unexpected and unfair is part of everyday life - even for those of us who have been dealt good cards.  Without this concept of Faith, which gives Hope for something more - there would be no need for reliance on an older wiser more infinite being to guide us.  We would see everything exactly how it will come to pass, the unexpected would not exist, and we wouldn't have various trials to overcome and learn from that allow us to gain understanding for what is right and wrong, good and bad.  Without Hope in something more, the evil nature of man's inherent selfish desires would rule supreme more so then we see today.

Now if there is in fact a spiritual afterlife beyond these short years on earth, and we are to become immortal beings with understanding - then having an infinite Creator that cares being the one to dictate the course for everything to come would far outweigh having ourselves blindly walk into the unknown future whatever that may be.

As limited beings recently birthed into existence from nothing - having capped levels of understanding - a mere 1000 years of life would become mundane and overly repetitious, let alone having an eternity without an infinite creator dictating our next steps.  If earth is it, while you may have had many good memories and times - the best taste of sweetness you got was in a place with so much hardships, hate, and suffering.  The peace you know in this life is but a hair of anything.

Fortunately for those with Faith, we know this initial test trial on earth will quickly pass in the overall spectrum of things as something more is to come in which we hold our hope.

*"****What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"***

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***"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"***

The reason this short initial test trial on earth is important is because of the eternal implications when factoring this life to an eternal one to come.  It would be neglect not to reference;

***"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."***

This is directly related to how you treat others (following the Golden Rule of doing to others as you would have them do to you - **Matthew 7:12 ESV**)  along with the honest attempts to improve through reflection and obedience in accordance to the truth written within your heart, and the knowledge you have obtained mentally through self study and the people in your life you look up to, who help give guidance regarding right and wrong.  Also how you witness here on earth, who you give the proper guidance to and the effect it has on bringing them to this light.

It's important to realize that we are all different at different walks in our journey, so everything is personal and specific to us individually given the various life situations we have been exposed to.  Not to mention the preset genetic predispositions we each have in how we are wired, which factors in how we are able to perceive things intellectually and learn.

Life circumstances and the limitless factors that contribute towards how we are molded make the important Christian commandments of "**J*udge not, and you will not be Judged***" and "***Forgive others and you will be Forgiven***" of the greatest importance.

                              ---------Now as we all know, life is not fair--------

***"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."***

       ------And as Solomon the wise pointed out, it is vanity to strive after Gods specifics - His thoughts are His own------

***"In my vain life I have seen everything.  There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing"***

In the creation of the plan, this all was necessary for the rules of Faith to be established, so that we can rely on an infinite God even when things don't make sense or seem right.  We learn trust.  If everything was consistent (like if rare occurrences "of luck" never happened, or if evolution of small percentages of mutations never occurred where science could be fully explained, or even in a more broad sense the difficult concepts of how we came to being were easily understood, etc - then the rules and concept of Faith would be a moot point as we would understand the unknown answers.  Though God created us to be dependent on Him, which is understandable because we are His creation. We prove ourselves to Him through Faith.  Now faith is an action word, but also a salvation word:

**"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."**

As infants to existence - created from dust, born completely helpless and without experience into this world - the horrendous evils and shocking hardships we first must experience are unavoidable.  To understand evil, we must first be exposed to it to know what is good.  As relative human understanding would dictate, exposure to extreme things for the first time can be very overwhelming.  Hence the animosity and resentment, doubt and fears we all feel towards the unexplained evils in this world and aspects of authority that do not yet fully make sense.

What is light without darkness? What is sweet without the bitter?  Exposure to evil and being in a fallen state is a necessary evil (or blessing depending how you look at it) that was unavoidable in the plan of creation that is playing out as we speak. Yet we simplistically think at a surface level by judging God in the now, not seeing the bigger picture to still play out.  God is close to the broken hearted, to the poor in spirit. Maybe if things aren't fair in this life, you'll get the blessing in the next if past your tests in this life? Is your faith too small to see out that far?

Now the bible tells us God knew with forethought **(ISAIAH 46:10 ESV)** that we were predestined to sin and endure through evil sufferings in life that we have no control over (blessings and curses are part of His / Our story), so a covenant of reconciliation must be established for righteousness sake on behalf of the Creator to us the created in order to confirm the Goodness and Righteousness of God.

We suffer unjustly (though were accountable for our actions/sins), so God allowed Himself to suffer unjustly (death of son and sharing of our hardships with us) which connects us in likeness, in that we now are able to understand good and evil. **(Genesis 3:22 ESV)**

Now the act of reconciliation - planned before the foundation of the world when the Words of the story were first made manifest **(John 1:1 ESV)** - came when God decided to humble Himself through an act of mercy towards His created through the Blood of Christ - the death of His superstar only child (If Jesus is the only son, then were all kinda like the adopted step children - but still greatly loved!)

*“****For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."***(Do you believe in the name of Jesus, what he stood for? Such as loving your neighbor as yourself, respect for others...etc)

Parents want their children to receive recognition and get credit they deserve. God the Father, is no different in this parallel teaching that plays out in creation within our families. And just as a King rules over the people, or as a Lord rules atop of the hierarchy in ancient civilizations, so God decided that he would give this blessing to his only Son.

***"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”***

and

***"God has put all things in subjection under his feet"***

As finite beings, any act from an infinite being towards us without utilizing the ability of wrath is an act of mercy to us. Me choosing not to squash an ant that bit me is an act of not utilizing wrath showing mercy towards the ant.  Any gift to another is an act of Grace. If I take the time to make something wonderful, I can choose to do with it whatever I like. Deciding to give you the gift I spent the time creating  - when I didn't have to - is the act of Grace itself.  God created this story, we get to live a life in this age and the one to come through God's act of Grace towards us.

***"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."***

A righteous covenant is established between man and Maker through the unjust death of His son.  A hierarchy is established, with Jesus Christ as Lord over those atoned through Faith in the belief of the Son and Grace through the Gift of everlasting life.  The hierarchy is righteous because Jesus **"The Name Above All Names"** was the one to endure the unjust suffering having no fault himself in the system God set up regarding sin, wrath and obedience - all aspects set in place for mankind's development through the Word of God.

God the Father, creates a begotten Son truly capable of understanding and sharing the greatness of Himself. Jesus =

             **"*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature*"**

The cool part is while we know his nature (Gentle, lowly in heart, Humble, Servant of all -  **MARK 10:43-45 & MATTHEW 11:29 ESV**) we still only know a fraction of Jesus's individualized personality (which is unique to each of us) while our understanding is so limited on this earth. Jesus's connection with each person is different, some have a higher connection of humor, some in song and worship, some in sacrifice, etc - all holy connections we get to experience differently deep within our souls.

Now back to the hierarchy established.  In the story, God creates a shared Father-Son relationship - a higher infinite connection we do not understand - and the God of all creation sacrifices his beloved son so that we all can share as heirs to the Kingdom in Heaven. The more people to share in love, the more fulfilling for everyone.  Father suffers unjust death of Son, The Son suffers unjustly through mocking, ridicule, & crucifixion - and we suffer because of the sins of our fallen nature (still accountable for our sins as lowest in the hierarchy) - all together in a covenant of righteousness where we are told the unexplained will come to light and be accounted for, all foreshadowed in these following verses.

***"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”***

*and*

*"****For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known & come to light.*"**

                                                                                 or

***" I have said these things to you in figures of speech.  The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father."* (Don't forget Matthew 10:32 ESV)**

                                                                         additionally

*"****Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  Then each one will receive his commendation from God."***

Everything that has and is happening now is necessary for us limited beings to gain understanding.  We see and endure evil to learn how sweet the good is.  We learn these things to set ourselves up for the unity to be shared in Heaven. As the world continues to progress, Love is beginning to be understood at a deeper level in comparison to the earlier more savage days of man (when life expectancy was longer and we needed to populate the earth) when strict rules were needed to establish obedience - keeping us from completely giving in to our evil nature.

Everything from creation (all aspects of everything we see in the physical world and spiritual world) was used to implant understanding into our minds so that we can learn to communicate, perceive - to exist.  From the days of old to our modern era, hierarchies have always been established in society.  King & Queen ruled over the people, Father & Mother over their children, Master over Slaves, Bosses over Employee's, etc.

Now in regards to this hierarchy where Jesus wants to teach us to strive to give God the Father glory and have us work through him;

***"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."***

             -------Jesus goes on to honor His Father in hierarchy statements like this-------

***"I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."***

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***"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."***

Now, while **Jesus is our King, Lord, Leader, Brother, & Friend** for all eternity, the concept where Jesus says "I and the Father are one" is the ultimate everlasting gift of salvation we get the privilege to accept by sharing in Jesus's eternal spirit, just as Jesus shares in the Fathers everlasting spirit.  This is referenced in passage below where Jesus is praying up to the Father.

 **"Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one"**

                                                                                   and

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us,**so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one,**so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me."

Now if Jesus suffered and is the only Son of God, then we too should accept suffering as something inevitable in our lives.  While in the moment suffering often seems too much to bear, in the end we grow from the experiences - no matter how difficult. The beautiful part is Jesus is leading the way for us, and has earned his spot at the right hand side of God the Father through all the trials and unjust treatment he endured for our fallen nature. Jesus taught us the faith as indicated below

***"Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"***

The man aspect of Jesus means he got a taste of what we are going through in this life as indicated in verse below;

***"Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered"***

                                                                             and

***"For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."***

 We can't avoid suffering, and as the Apostle Paul wrote, it teaches us about Hope. We can't avoid temptations either. We endure to be the best we can be, we all sin - though we progress to free ourselves from the bondage that sin keeps us in (in lack of understanding, connection with God, & often true blessings).  We must remember that everything is a test, and how quick you pass the tests of life will dictate how fast you progress.  As Paul wrote'

*"****we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,  and endurance produces character, and character produces hope"***

All the trials we face, give us a reason to have hope.  Without hope, we lose the will to desire for something more. Suffering is necessary for us all and a blessing in disguise we are learning for the first time in our existence here on earth.

But what about the Holy Spirit?  I thought that God is all three in one? The Trinity. That is the case (as is also the case that after we get an eternal spirit given to us in the next life, we will all be one in God's spirit - still with our own distinct personalities) but the focus the bible gives us is to always give glory to God the Father and the Son Jesus, while being thankful we get a taste of God's Holy Spirit within us.

All you need to know is that the Holy Spirit (AKA The Helper, The Holy Ghost) is the Spirit of Truth within us that teaches us the truths in line with the teachings of the bible (John 16:13). The truths are part of the inherent understanding we know deep within our hearts that co-align with the context of the Word in the correct way we live out our actions and think our thoughts.  Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a special gift for us that we don't fully understand;

*"****The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.  So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."***

                                             John the Baptist goes on to say

***"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.  He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"***

                                    Jesus told of the importance of receiving this Holy Spirit within;

*"****Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.***

                       Jesus tells how this Spirit of Truth, written within our hearts - teaches us spiritual truths;

***"These things I have spoken to you while I am with you.  But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."***

Jesus died for our sins and three days later an everlasting spirit raised him from the dead on the day we call Easter.

***"God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all"***

God spirit exists in us all, it gives life.  He is jealous for us to give his thoughts to him, as He takes pride in us being his creation. (**JAMES 4:5)**

The Father allowed His son Jesus to give us His spirit, despite all our weaknesses stemming from the sin that oppresses us in this life. If eternity is forever, then the more people to share in God's love the better. There will be plenty of time to get to know everyone. Therefore being a Christian right now, earns us our stripes for heaven to come.

Jesus, rejected the temptations of the world, washed the feet of those lower than him, stood up for those who had no one to stick up for themselves, taught Love and wanted us to become "brothers, sisters, and friends" in the next life to come. All while forgiving us and not holding our faults against us.  Though as is the case with any leader, He expects progress for the betterment of all.

Love God, Love your Neighbor - Jesus died for us.

-MDF