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## **WHAT GOD WILL NOT EXPLAIN TO US**

Last Sunday night I watched 60 Minutes, and one of the segments was a report on the civil war in Syria. What began in 2011 as a protest movement against the dictatorial rule of President Bashar al-Assad escalated into a civil war with Assad being backed by Russia and Iran against the protesters backed by the United States, Saudi Arabia and others.

The level of brutality that Assad has used against his own people has been awful. Time and again his forces have used “barrel bombs” against markets, hospitals and schools. They have used poison gas against towns and villages, raining death by suffocation on thousands, mostly mothers and their children and old men and women. Multitudes of their citizens have fled and become refugees.

Assad’s army and secret police have rounded up hundreds of men, women and children suspected of disloyalty and forced them into prisons where they have been subjected to the most inhuman tortures imaginable. 60 Minutes showed photographs of people, even children, who had been tortured to death in ways that I won’t describe. The torturers don’t end the suffering of their victims quickly but keep them alive for months of daily torment - - and then display their brutalized bodies to intimidate their enemies.

What is happening in Syria is simply another chapter illustrating man’s inhumanity - including Hitler’s holocaust, Stalin’s pogroms, North Korea’s death camps, and extending back in history to the Romans, Assyrians and Babylonians.

This report on 60 Minutes troubled me deeply. I did not sleep well, which is not unusual for old folks, and I awoke early the next morning still disturbed by what I had seen. The question kept repeating in my mind: “How could God permit such things? If I had the power, I would never allow such monstrous things to be done to anyone, much less to women and children. How can God permit such atrocities?”

I prayed, God, please, please, hear my prayer and answer my question.

Instantly I had a barrage of impressions that I believe were from God. Obviously, “words from God” that come to us are subjective, and you must “test” them yourself to decide if you think they were truly from Him. Following are the impressions that I believe were from God:

“No! I will not answer your question! You must decide whether to believe what the Bible declares about me:

*God is good; God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all; God is love; God is kind; God has a good plan for your life; Every good and perfect thing comes down from above, from the Father of lights, in whom there is no darkness or shadow of turning; God desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; God so loved the world that He gave his only Son.....And innumerable other Bible verses that declare the goodness and kindness of God.*

“You have not only the testimony of the Bible, but your personal history of my treatment of you during your life. How have I treated you?” I answered - With mercy and kindness and patience and forgiveness - - always.

The impressions continued: “So you must decide whether to trust Me - - or to demand that I give you understanding.” This is, of course, what Proverbs 3:5 tells us. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding....*

Obviously, this subject has puzzled and disturbed all thinking people across the years. You have undoubtedly struggled with the same question. The problem of evil and suffering has been presented as follows:

“A loving God could never permit such things; therefore, (a) God cannot do anything about it because His power is limited, or (b) Although God could end evil and suffering, He chooses not to do so - - - therefore, He is not a loving God.”

The Bible refutes both of these alternatives. It declares that **(a) God’s wisdom and power is total and unlimited:** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1) I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the stars are at my command. (Isa. 45:12) Nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37) God does whatever He pleases and nothing can stay His hand. (Ps. 135:6) (Innumerable passages.)*

The Bible also declares that **(b) God is good, loving, kind, faithful, Light.** (See the Scriptures quoted at the top of this column.)

Some other thoughts that came to my mind about this puzzling subject:

- We tend to judge God by this tiny little moment of our life on earth, but God’s domain is eternity, which we can’t really fathom.
- God permitted Job to go through terrible loss and suffering.....and God never apologized or explained this to Job; in fact, God rebuked Job for not trusting Him in his trials. When Job was granted a deeper insight, he quickly repented for his accusations against God..
- Think for a moment about the worst time of emotional or physical suffering in your life.

When it was past, it became nothing but a memory. Confirming this, the Bible says that a woman goes through great suffering during childbirth, but then she forgets the suffering for the joy of bringing a child into the world. There are many Scriptures about this subject, consider a couple:

- *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:16)*
- *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)*

I believe that this issue of evil and suffering is one of the biggest tests that humans have to face in this life. We need to spend time with God's promises in the Scriptures. We need to decide to trust God.

Rick Joyner recently told about an extended painful sickness he went through a few months ago when he had COVID and another agonizing physical affliction at the same time. Rick determined at that time that he would praise and worship the Lord through the trial. He said that the Lord visited him for several days in a row. The highlight came when he had a vision of God the Father with His head bowed and bent over. Rick said he thought to himself that something really bad had happened. Jesus, standing next to Rick, explained: "I wanted you to see the way your thanksgiving in the midst of your trials touched the Father." Our love and trust for the Lord even when we can't understand touches Him deeply.

## **BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS - 2**

Last month I started writing about false teachings and false teachers in the church and pointed out that it is one of the major subjects in the New Testament. Jesus teaches about it in each of the four Gospels, and there are teachings about it, sometimes whole chapters, in the epistles of Paul, Peter, John and Jude. Jesus warned about false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7, which I covered last month. And in Matthew 24, Jesus is talking about the end of the age and says: *And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end shall be saved.*

Do you believe we are living in the end days? Is lawlessness increasing? Do you see a lot of Christians whose hearts have grown cold toward the Lord? Jesus said, *The one who endures to the end shall be saved.* But when we accept Christ as our Savior, aren't we "sealed" in a forever bond with Him (Eph. 1:13)? Jesus even stated (in John 10) that no one would be able to remove from Him anyone who came to Him in faith.

In studying this subject long ago, I read the statement: "Only enduring faith is saving faith." The point for you and me is that we should never take our salvation for granted and allow our hearts to grow cold.

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Jesus warns us about **false prophets**, while Paul warns us about **false apostles**. I suggest you read 2 Corinthians, Chapter 11, for the whole teaching.

In 2 Cor. 11:4, 13 - Paul says, *For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles ..... For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their deeds.*

It is very possible for a person to be a false prophet or false pastor and to be deceived and not know it. But it is also possible for someone to be a false prophet, false apostle or false pastor and to be fully aware that they are not what they are pretending to be. I have read statements by people who confessed, or bragged, that they were Satanists and had moved into the leadership of Evangelical churches, some had even moved into being pastors. This is hard for us to comprehend, but isn't this exactly what the Word of God is warning us about? Don't you remember the terrible stories of men like Jim Jones, who led hundreds of his followers in Guyana to mass suicide, and David Koresh, who led many to death in the siege in Waco, Texas? And if you look back into the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, you find evil Popes who led a massive church organization into the evil of the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Besides these extreme examples, I have ministered to ordinary Christian people whose lives were really messed up by false teachings, false churches, false pastors. In some cases, those "Christian churches," exercised such total control over their members that it resulted in divorce, alienation and even suicide. These false churches are not that uncommon - - I know of two churches like that here in Grand Junction (actually, people told me about them some years ago, and I haven't heard any recent reports about them). Our team ministered to people in Mexico and here in the U.S. whose families had been turned topsy-turvy because of false teachings by false "Christian" leaders. People need to be really careful about the church they join.

Verses 3 & 4 in 2 Cor. 11 are very important: *But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus....., or if you receive a different spirit..... or a different gospel..... you bear this beautifully.*

Note that Paul is not concerned about peripheral issues but about things that are central and essential - "another Jesus...a different spirit...a different gospel."

"Another Jesus" would be to present a Jesus to people other than the Jesus presented in the Bible. The Jesus of the Bible was the sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He was born of a virgin; He died on the cross for our sins; He was in the grave for three days and rose from the dead; He ascended to the Father and ever lives to make intercession for us; He is the way, the truth and life; He will come again to judge the living and the dead; He was the God-man, both human and divine; He is our Savior, Healer, Deliverer.

Anyone who presents a Jesus other than the one clearly presented in both the Old Testament (through prophecies) and New Testament of the Bible is false - a false prophet, a false preacher.

To preach that there are many ways to God besides through faith in Jesus Christ is to preach "another Jesus" and "another gospel" for He clearly stated that: *No one comes to the Father but by me.* And Peter preached to the Sanhedrin: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12)

To preach that Jesus was a Republican, or a Democrat, or a Communist, or that He came to make us all wealthy, or poor - is to present another Jesus. To teach people that the angel Moroni came and revealed that Jesus was the brother of Lucifer and that our Heavenly Father was once a man, and that all (Mormon) men can one day be the God of their own planet is to present another Jesus, another God, and another gospel. Paul addresses this very clearly: *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.* (Galatians 1:8) Whoa! That is a scary Scripture!

**(Important: God wants us to know His Word, the holy Bible, so well that we can immediately discern the difference between true and false teaching and true and false teachers (prophets, pastors, etc.). But He does not want us to hate and despise those who have false beliefs but to love them and lead them to the truth if possible. Remember that you and I had a lot of false beliefs B.C. So we are to hate the ungodly Mormon doctrine but to love Mormons, and Muslims, and Democrats, and Republicans, and Baptists, and Pentecostals, etc.)**

A different gospel would be to say that people are saved by belonging to a certain church or denomination; or by giving a lot of money to a church or to the poor; or to say that ultimately everyone is going to heaven and that there is no final judgment and no hell because God is too loving to judge and condemn anyone. If this is true, then Jesus was deceived and His death on the cross was a meaningless charade.

NEXT MONTH: We will look at an interesting revelation in Scripture about false leaders: that their character seems to be as much of an issue as their teaching of truth. In other words, not only does their teaching have to line up with Biblical truth, but the way they live has to line up with the example and teaching of Jesus. For an example of this, read 2 Peter 2:1-22.

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### 3 START

## PAGE ROMANCE AND A FRESH

(The two preceding articles are pretty heavy going, so I found a couple of Newsletter reports in my Ancient Files that might give you a little breather. The first is from my mailing of April, 2004, seventeen years ago:)

"On my way home from the mission trip to Guadalajara I had a five-hour layover in Phoenix and had an interesting encounter. A gentleman came to my table and we fell into conversation. His name is Hollis Black, age 86, and he has been a pastor and missionary for many years. He told me that his wife died some years ago, he has remarried, and now he and his new wife think that God may be calling them to go to Australia and start a new ministry. Good night! He's 86, has a new wife, and is ready to take on another adventure for God.

I know some folks in their 60's and 70's who are sitting in their recliners feeling bored and thinking they are too old to serve God. "*Wake up, O sleepers, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.*" Take inspiration from Hollis Black. It ain't over till it's over.

While I am not interested in getting remarried, Hollis' example has set me to thinking. It wouldn't hurt to put out some feelers. If you know an eligible Christian lady who would be interested in marrying me (and how could they not be?) please have them send me a resume, a photo, and a statement of assets. If their assets are over \$1 million, the photo is optional."

After about a year had passed, I made a follow-up report, as follows:

"Several people have asked about the response to my request some months back that all of those ladies interested in marrying me send in their applications. This is, of course, privileged information, but I will admit

that I did not receive as many applications as I expected. This has been very puzzling, and after thinking about it I have come up with some possible explanations:

- Enemies in the post office
- Many ladies probably thought the competition would be too great and feared rejection
- (My favorite) Many probably felt unworthy
- Some may have suspected my motives since I mentioned that a photo would not be required for lady millionaires. But I'm sure that no one could have thought that. My only reason for desiring a million dollars is for altruistic purposes. (Although it would be nice to have a Hummer and a big boat.)"

Well, many years have passed, and I had about given up the idea of Springtime in the Rockies, when the miracle happened. A very lovely lady and I have been kind of engaged for about a year now. We have been discreet about it because the last thing we want is to be hounded by the paparazzi, like Harry and Meghan. I will probably be accused of being a cradle-robber, as she is barely into her 80's. And we both believe in long engagements, so in due course we will send you an announcement if you are still with us.

### ARE THERE DEGREES OF SIN?

Dennis Prager, an orthodox Jew, said one time on his talk show that during the ten-year period when he conducted a weekly interreligious dialogue on radio, nearly every Protestant minister said to him, "A sin is a sin."

Do you believe that? Do you believe that to God there are degrees of sin, or that every sin is equal? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there are "mortal" sins, the really bad ones, and lesser sins. What do you think?

The idea that all sins are equal comes from James 2:10-11, which says:

*For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point is guilty of all. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*

James is simply showing that we are all sinners, that every one of us breaks God's laws in one way or another, so we all deserve judgment except for the grace of God. He is definitely not saying that every sin is equal in God's eyes.

Jesus said that anger and hatred is tantamount to murder, but He did not suggest that you should go ahead and kill that person. He said that lust in the heart is in God's eyes comparable to adultery, but didn't say; therefore, you may as well go ahead and commit the deed. That is foolishness. God is concerned with our hearts because, *Out of the heart come the issues of life.*

Just as humans distinguish between jaywalking and murder, so too does God distinguish between sins. Read

the book of Leviticus to see the fine line by which God distinguishes between sins.

Jesus said that there are sins, and there is the "unforgivable sin" against the Holy Spirit, which I believe is to resist the Holy Spirit by rejecting the Savior God has given to us. Jesus said that in the final judgment those who broke God's laws are going to receive many lashes or fewer lashes depending on whether they understood God's will (Luke 12:47-48). He also said, *To whom much is given, much will be required.*

Summary: No, a sin is not a sin - there are distinctions between sins, as the Word of God and common sense make clear.

### THE COST OF LIVING

An article in the Denver Post reported the arrest of a couple that had robbed 15 or 20 convenience stores. The couple were honest about their crime spree and explained to police that they had just been spending the money on day-to-day expenses like motel rooms and drugs.

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### THE BLESSING OF A BAD START

During one of my times in Mexico when I prayed with and counseled a lot of people, I started to see something that I hadn't thought about before. One of the men who came had been born into a totally dysfunctional family: rejection, abuse, addictions. He had recently accepted Christ and needed much help to get free from all his chains. At the end of our session I explained the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues, and he was eager to receive everything that God had for him. He quickly received and experienced the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In my understanding of Scripture, this experience (1) opens us to a more intimate relationship with the Lord, (2) better equips us to fight the inner battles we are all fighting, and (3) enables us to enter into the ministry the Lord has for each of us much more effectively. That is certainly the way it worked in my life.

The next man in the counseling line was also a new convert, and he was one of the rare people who had been born into a good, loving family. (They probably seem to be rare to me because of the broken people who come for ministry.) After ministering to his needs, I asked him if he wanted the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He decided that was a bit too extreme for him, and besides that he could not understand why he might need it.

Jesus said, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, and Blessed are those who hunger and thirst* .....for all of God they can get. If you had a terrible, painful start in life, maybe that is why you searched for God so desperately until you found Him. Maybe you should thank Him for your painful past. Joyce Meyer has said that it was because of her awful childhood with a terrible, abusive father and

her desperate struggle to find God and to be healed that she has been blessed with a worldwide ministry to help broken people.

If you were blessed with a wonderful start in life and you are blessed now with health and prosperity, perhaps you don't comprehend your need for more of God.

*Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked'.....(Rev. 5:17)*

Perhaps you should ask God to show you the true condition of your heart.

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God bless,

Glenn

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