

Matthew 15 Cell notes - "The Good, the bad and the ugly" ~ 17/04/10

Ever asked: "Why does God allow bad things happen to good people?" Unfortunately, we've redefined the word "good" all too easily...

Here, Jesus is still confronting not just the reality of the human heart, but also of what we do to try to cover up, or deal with the issue. He tears a strip off the Pharisees for their pitiful attempts at saving themselves, and pours grace upon a woman who understands Him as her only means of mercy. And in between these 2 opposing responses, he cuts to the heart of the matter: v19.

As we look around the world, we have to say SOMETHING WENT WRONG. The temptation, however, is to divide the world into what's good, what's bad/what's right, what's not. What does the Bible say?

Rom 3.9: *"There is no one righteous, not even one"*
(see also Ps 14.3 & 53.3, 1 Kings 8.46, Ecc 7.20, 1 Jn 1.8)

So, what or who IS "good"? Wayne Grudem: *"God is the final standard of good. Thus "good" is what God approves..."* Does God approve of EVERYTHING you say, think, do, dream, fantasise, hunger for? REALLY? Ultimately, we are all sick...

Jeremiah 17.9: *The heart is deceptive above all things & beyond cure* [ESV: *desperately sick*]

Luke 18.18-19: *"A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (=GO TO HEAVEN) "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."* He is the only Decider of what is good, the final standard.

Thus: only the good go to heaven (the common assumption anyway!). The Bible agrees, but none of us qualify... BAD NEWS for us. What to do? 4 responses: 3 wrongs & a right:

1. Ignore/deny it: Maybe it'll all go away. Or believe you're not bad in the first place.
2. Rescue ourselves: with sets of rules (laws) like the Pharisees. We can perform spiritual cosmetic surgery & create a plastic moralism that still disguises a filthy heart. Or, it's every man for himself, survival of the fittest. We can also legitimise our sin by motives, circumstance, blaming others (Adam & Eve).
3. Look for a rescuer: living life through others, pleasing others (trouble is, THEY set the standard!), or the teachings of a guru/religious teacher.

OR: fall upon Jesus as our Rescuer.

We can fall upon Jesus in absolute humility like the Canaanite woman, depending upon Him as the Answer to brokenness, helplessness, calling Him "Lord" & "Master", saying "have mercy, help me".

God, in His perfect justice, hasn't ignored the wrath we deserve as sinners. In His perfect love, Jesus took it upon Himself. And when we, in faith, believe this and humbly fall upon Him as our Lord and Master in true repentance, He places OUR sin upon Himself, and HIS goodness upon us. Hallelujah!

However, as Christians, we can still continue to fall into the same trap:

1. We can still ignore/deny the fact that we have wandered from the truth, ignoring what He says, and revel in disobedience, having a tantrum, our fingers in our ears.
2. We can still try to rescue ourselves... Even as Christians, we can still fail to fall on Jesus, and perform spiritual cosmetic surgery without true repentance. "*Why should I forgive "___"?* *Look at all the good works I'm doing!*" Or making a list of X to avoid Y = still legalism!
3. We can still look for a rescuer somewhere else - either in the latest Christian fad or speaker. We can do church without being church [Have we reduced Christianity to merely singing songs and listening to a preacher?]. We can even look to the world - money, lust, TV, etc., finding contentment outside of Him.

This is all saying that the cross is not enough...

Why does God allow *bad* things to happen to *good* people? It's a bad question. R.C.Sproul said:

*"Why do bad things happen to good people?
That only happened once, and He volunteered."*

This week, reflect upon the journey to the cross, and remember the Good, the bad and the ugly. The bad and the ugly is sin, our hearts, destined for eternal punishment unless that sin gets dealt with. The Good is Jesus Christ. Once and for all.

Run to Him. Let Him work His miracle of transformation in You. Because He's a good God.

Cell Q's:

1. How would you explain to a generous, law-abiding, non-Christian friend what God's understanding of "good" is?
2. If you were God, how would you have reacted if the people you'd created treated you in the way they have?
3. In what areas in our life as the "Spirit-filled"/"Reformed, Charismatic" church are we still in danger of trying rescue ourselves?