

WHY DOESN'T GOD DO SOMETHING?

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Have you wondered why God apparently doesn't intervene to heal more sick people, miraculously? Medical science does heal many—but does that mean that the Great Physician has virtually abdicated His healing role to the medical profession? Could there be a different circumstance today than there was 2000 years ago when Christ and His apostles did heal the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, even raised the dead?

We know that (a) the message of the cross was more vividly proclaimed then (1 Cor. 2:1-3; Gal. 6:14, etc), resulting in (b) deeper, more thorough conversions, (c) making it safer for the Lord to work these miracles because (d) the healed persons would “henceforth” be “constrained to live unto Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

We know Christ “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8), which means He is still compassionate. He doesn't like to see people suffer, for He suffers with them (Isa. 63:9). Therefore we can only conclude that the most important ministry of healing is proclaiming the only message that can reconcile alienated hearts to God—the genuine gospel of His grace, unmixed with any element of legalism or Babylonian confusion.

We are told that in the final work, “miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed” (*Great*

Controversy, p. 612). That must mean that in that same final work, the pure true gospel will again be recovered and proclaimed. If the Lord can give us the grace to be humble in heart today, we can begin at least to recover that blessing, and that will be Good News.

If you are a normal human being no doubt you have been forced to wonder why there is so much suffering in this world. Maybe you have watched a loved one endure pain, sickness, suffering, or death. Even the animal world is not free from the results of pain. I watched a friend's cat who suffer a slow, painful death.

We often ask in these circumstances, “Why doesn't God do something, intervene somehow?” Many times we blame God for causing troubles to come upon us or our friends. As in the story of Job, the first chapter reveals that Satan works troubles behind the scenes and brings disasters. God allowed these things to come upon Job, and set a limit on how far Satan could go with his wicked work.

God is not aloof to the sufferings of his children. “He . . . became a man of sorrows . . . acquainted with grief.” Jesus Christ felt “afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up” (Ps. 88:15). From the first time He witnessed the sacrifice of the innocent lamb, on His first trip to the temple for the Passover feast, He realized that He was the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). “In all their affliction He was afflicted” (Isa. 63:9). There is nothing that God is more intimately acquainted with than suffering and death.

From the time of its inception, sin has caused the heart of God more suffering than is humanly possible to imagine. The prophet Jeremiah recorded these words: “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow, like unto His sorrow, which is done unto me, that which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger” (Lam. 1:12).

In “tasting the death” for everyone (Heb. 2:9), there is no sorrow “like unto His sorrow.” If we begin to see that, we do not need to feel alone in suffering or in watching those dear to us suffer. We have a Comforter who brings to us the assurance that Jesus Christ was touched with our feelings—in every way.

Please share this good hope with someone today.

Is there anywhere a human heart that by nature doesn't have a storm inside? If you are perfectly at-one-with God, you belong in Heaven. Well, at least, it's your job to help those billions who by nature share the universal human problem of alienation from God. “Why has He allowed *me* to suffer? Why *me* . . . to endure injustice? Is God fair?” One may piously exude all the self-righteous phrases while deep inside unanswered questions destroy our “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1). And it's not only teens who have that cauldron boiling inside; grey-hairs do, too.

Here's a shocker: the closer you come to Jesus Christ, the bigger you will realize your problem to be. Come *very* close to Him, and you will “taste” the

depth of the darkness He experienced on His cross when He cried out, “My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?” If one has never grown up out of innocent childhood, he may never think or feel on that level; but Jesus did.

“Why doesn't God *do* something?” is the heart-cry of the person who dares to think, not only about his own tiny little problems, but about . . . well, why do the poor have to suffer while the rich have long since left being millionaires (now you're nobody unless you're a billionaire), . . . and why must the innocent suffer so?

Back again to the cross on Calvary: in that total darkness, while He hung there in that deepest perplexity and despair, He made a choice—to *believe* that His Father was good even though everything was shouting in His ears that His Father was unjust. In total darkness, in the vastness of empty heart-broken space, He built a great bridge between alienated humanity and God. It's called the Atonement, the at-one-ment. If His Father has forsaken Him, *He will not forsake His Father.*

On His cross He built something out of nothing, like He had created a universe out of nothing. At any cost, He will believe Good News. He will create Good News. You don't have to build that Bridge; all you have to do is, well, believe that He built it.

Why doesn't God destroy our wicked world now? There is an answer in the sanctuary service of Israel:

(a) Two lambs were offered “daily” on the altar of burnt offering, morning and evening, in behalf of everyone within the boundaries of Israel.

“Strangers” and Gentiles were included as the beneficiaries. No repentance was required, no confession; no questions were asked; the lambs were “offered continually,” whether anybody believed or not (Ex. 29:38-42). All you had to do was to be a human being, and you were under the umbrella of God’s abounding grace.

(b) This was the gospel by “moonlight” (Rev. 12:1). As we come to the “sunlight” of the New Testament, the meaning is made clear: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). “God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air [we breathe]” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 68). The daily service of the two lambs was a ministry for the whole world. When Jesus came to John asking for baptism, he refused. Jesus had to give him a Bible study there in the water, convincing John that He was the antitypical Lamb of the daily service. “Then he suffered Him” (Matt. 3:15).

(c) The next day John introduced Him, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Not “maybe,” “perhaps,” or “He would like to be,” or “He takes away the sin of a few.” Why this universal sacrifice of atonement? “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

(d) The “incense” offered on the altar of incense daily or continually was also a type of a universal ministry of intercession. Only the blood of Jesus continually ministered keeps this wicked world from being destroyed (Rev. 8:3-5; when He ceases to

minister His blood, then will come the time of trouble). Thank God He still ministers today in the Most Holy Apartment! That has to be Good News! And you and I can respond today! And that’s Good News.

Even in the midst of our troubles, we humans still enjoy a vast amount of peace, though we may not be conscious of its true source. What Isaiah is saying is this: None of us could know the “credit” benefit of even a moment of fleeting happiness unless a corresponding “debit” had been already borne in our stead by that divine Suffering One. This is the underlying truth behind every human joy, every springtime, every delicious strawberry.

He was rejected on earth and expelled, for the people said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Luke 19:4. Instead of the bitter rejection which He felt, we experience His unconditional acceptance of us, which includes the Father’s also. It’s amazing, not only that He has forgiven His murderers, but that He has not in high dudgeon washed His hands of our predicament. We may richly deserve to be without Him, but in the fullest sense possible He assures us, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20.

Jesus’ work was to reveal the facts about His Father’s character. Not only are Christ and the Father one, but since Christ has become incorporate in humanity and we in Him, our yearnings and life experiences become His. This staggers our imagination, for we find it hard to believe that Good News can be that good. But it is.

But our question is: If God is so concerned about us, and if He is all-powerful, and if He feels our suffering, how can He allow evil to go on?

Is He Doing All He Can? The Bible discloses a behind-the-scenes cosmic conflict. There is a very good reason for what superficially *appears* to be unconcern on His part. The truth is, He is very much concerned. But He has an enemy who is fighting a war against Him. This explains what appears to be a mysterious impotence on the part of God.

We are not surprised at rebellions and wars on earth, but who would expect such to happen in heaven? That's where evil started:

War broke out in heaven: Michael [Another name for Christ. See Jude 9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16] and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angel fought, but they did not prevail, now was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. . . . "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." Revelation 12:7-12.

During World War II, the subjects of the British crown endured years of agony, while a kind and sensitive King George VI and his gracious queen sat on the throne. The king listened to the daily news of destruction, his own heart torn with sympathy for the agony of his subjects. Gladly

would he have ended the war at any moment if he could. But the war was not of his making. Adolf Hitler had thrust the conflict upon him, and the security of Europe required that it be fought through to the bitter end.

This is a miniscule glimpse of the problem which God has. An enemy has thrust this greater war upon Him—a controversy not of His choosing. The cosmic drama of the conflict between good and evil began with Act I—the war in heaven where Satan met defeat. Act II is of our making introducing the insurrection into this planet. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, signed this world over to the control of God's enemy and made themselves his captives. Here the rebel managed to recoup his loss in Act I.

God's love could not abandon the world. The very nature of that love required Him to rescue us. Thus, Act III. The Father must endure intimate sympathy with the agony on this planet until the great conflict between Christ and Satan can be resolved.

Christ came two thousand years ago to claim His rightful place as the world's Ruler. If He had been accepted, we would long ago have realized the world peace, security, and happiness that we yearn for. But since He was rejected, crucified, cast out of His world, the planet itself is still in rebellion against Him, and no more recognizes His authority, than did the Nazis that of George VI or Franklin Roosevelt. While there are people today who wholeheartedly accept Christ as the rightful Ruler of this planet, they are in the minority, fighting "underground" as it were.

The Lord is eager to return to this earth to end this nightmare of selfishness and sin with all its attendant cruelty. No way is He sitting by idly, enjoying Himself in celestial luxury while the war rages on. His love for the world is intense. The universe itself cannot wait for the cosmic V-Day when the cruel enemy shall be forever defeated. Romans 8:19-23.

One of the most profound disclosures of Scripture is that one of our days is to God like a thousand years. 2 Peter 3:8. To us the darkest day is always short, for the pain we can feel is finite, only our own or at best a partial sympathy felt for those few nearest us. But in deep sensitivity God must feel the pain of everyone on earth. Surely that must make one of our collective days seem like a thousand years to Him. He has so much more consciousness pressed into a day than we have. Imagine sharing in the agony of millions, yes billions, of people! He can never go to sleep as we can. Psalm 121:3. He longs ever so much for this planet's pain to come to an end.

His solution to world problems is infinitely efficient: no band-aids to apply spectacular but futile experiments. He must get to the root of human problems—the sinful selfishness entrenched in human hearts. All the suffering in the world is in some way its consequence. In order to solve the problem, that source of evil must be eradicated. Not that selfish people must be eradicated, but selfishness itself must be. This must be accomplished by proclaiming and demonstration the Good News of what Christ accomplished on His

cross and what He continues to do as the world's High Priest, as Saviour from that sin.

Satan opposes this. His last-ditch stand is his claim, that the sacrifice of Christ and His on-going ministry are an exercise in futility. Look, he sneers, the world is worse now than it was when the Son of God died for its salvation!

To answer this charge, the gospel must produce a beautiful change in believing humanity, and thus give evidence that the plan of salvation is not in vain. Enter Act IV.

Is there such a gospel? Is it *really* Good News? Does it have power? If so, how does it work? The precious message the Lord sends to the world is not a thunder-and-lightning denunciation of sin abounding, but a heart-warming message of *much more* abounding grace. That is what penetrates to the inner badness of human evil and changes hearts.

God's Present Problem

When you and I pray, Please, Lord, why don't You *do* something to help this sad world?" The answer comes back to us, "Why don't *you* do something?" By His rejection and crucifixion, Christ has been voted out of office on this planet. He cannot stage a coup and usurp control where He is not wanted, but He can work in and through those people who commit themselves to Him and who respond to His Holy Spirit.

He is "the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world." John 1:9. Not all welcome and receive the light, but some do, thank God. He has encircled the world with an

atmosphere of grace as real as the air we breathe. Those who chose to welcome it become His children and His co-workers.

He will have the cooperation of the “underground” forces who are loyal to Him in this great controversy, ministering that grace in a practical way to the world. The only hands He can use, the only voice through which He can speak, are ours.

The rebel unfortunately also has collaborators: Christians who deny the gospel. As the true gospel propagates light, so its denial actually propagates darkness. The darkness-gospel looks good in that it regales us with good advice, detailed instruction *what* to do. The problem is that we don’t know *how* to do what is right. What we need to know is what *Christ* has done and is doing. Only that knowledge will make it possible for us to be transformed.

But people who think they believe Christ’s gospel can be obsessed with a subtle, camouflaged legalism. It’s the idea that “we-must-do-this,” “we-must-do-that,” “we-must-work-more,” “we-must-be-more-faithful,” “we-must-get-the-victory,” “we-must-study-more,” “we-must-pray more,” “we-must-witness-more,” *ad infinitum*. Always the idea is that we have to work at this or that; a debt hangs over us, an obligation that crushes us. The root poison of self-concern remains in spite of all these human efforts. Ross D. London (Hoboken, N. J.), writing in *Newsweek*, April 24, 1989, p. ii, says that “. . . from Kant to Sartre to confront moral issues. In fact, choices are truly moral only when they are made without regard to their consequences in an afterlife. If one chooses good only to gain heaven and avoid

hell, one simply acts out of self-interest.”¹ This is the essence of legalism.

Many join the Jews of Christ’s day in asking, “What shall we *do* that we might work the works of God?” They don’t listen to that divine answer that Jesus gave, perhaps with a sigh. “This is the work of God, that ye *believe*. . . .” John 6:28, 29. There is a latent fear of the power of such true faith lest we end up not doing enough good works. It has been assumed for centuries that the only motivation that will be effective is the fear of eternal damnation if one does not do everything just right.

But a distorted “gospel” based on fear can produce only frustration, discouragement, and spiritual impotence. And widespread *laissez-faire* in almost every religion testifies to that prevailing distortion. The problem is that faith is not understood as a heart-appreciation of the heavenly love that casts our fear. 1 John 4:17-19.

A Better Motivation Is the Answer

The pure, true gospel reveals a *faith which works*. That is why “it is the power of God to salvation.” [Romans 1:16.] It produces heart-acceptance of, and obedience to, all the truth. The inspired apostle “determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. . . . My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of

¹http://books.google.com/books?id=QvcmAQAAIAAJ&q=%22chooses+good+only+to+gain+heaven+and+avoid+hell%22&dq=%22chooses+good+only+to+gain+heaven+and+avoid+hell%22&hl=en&ei=xry9TtjIPMqWiQLrk8GQAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA.

the Spirit and of power.” 1 Corinthians 2:2, 24. In these last days the Lord has promised that again such a message will be proclaimed world-wide, a message that transcends fear and truly casts it out.

The reason why it works is that it replaces legalistic imperatives with gospel enablings: “I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having *the everlasting gospel* to preach to . . . every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” This angel calls upon us to “fear God,” that is, to appreciate His character, “and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come.” Revelation 14:6, 7, emphasis added. The idea is to honor Him, to appreciate the honest reality of His character of unselfish love.

The first angel is followed by a second who also has Good News but who warns against its clever counterfeit: “Another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen.’” A third angel warns against a still more clever future counterfeit, the most subtle that the world has ever seen: worship of the beast and his image and receiving his “mark.” Vss. 9-11.

The pure recovered gospel is ready for this twenty-first century. The reason why it is called “the everlasting gospel” is that it concentrates into one brilliant beam the light of truth that has shone dimly through all past ages.

The Book of Revelation encourages us to hope for the very best. This vast activity on earth is not in vain. A people are raised up who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Vs. 12. In giving His Son for the world, the Father made an infinite investment. Now it will be seen that it

pays off. Christ did not make His sacrifice in vain. A people are raised up who deeply appreciate it. The hopes and fears of untold billions of all ages are summed up in that final assurance of atonement effected and realized.

The text assures us that He will have a world-wide body of people who reflect the beauty of His character. Of themselves they will have no innate goodness, but as broken scraps of otherwise worthless mirror can dazzle one’s eyes with the sun’s rays, so each believer in Christ will beautifully reflect a facet of His perfect character.

If God “so loved the world that He gave His only Son” two thousands years ago, we can be sure that He still “so loves” the world of today that He will not permit any human soul to miss hearing in some way what the Good News is. The apostle Paul calls it “righteousness by faith,” an effective motivation for a change of heart. Galatians 5:5, 6. That final display of truth is symbolized in Revelation as “another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with His glory.” Revelation 18:1. The love of God, the cross of Christ, demand the imminent fulfillment of this prophecy. This is the next item on the world’s agenda.

The Good News reveals three glorious truths: a God who is a Heavenly Father; a Saviour who remains for all eternity a member of the human family, One with us; and a Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ sent to “abide” or to stay with every human soul who welcomes His presence. A great personage like the President of our nation may

seem close to us through the TV screen, but he remains a finite human being who actually can be close to only a handful in his inner circle. Christ is closer to us individually than any human being can be because He comes in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

How can anyone be depressed if he or she will believe such Good News?