

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

Imagine There's No Heaven. It's Easy If You Try Pt. 3

October 18, 2020

Has anyone ever asked you; "Why does God permit evil?"

I was talking to my unsaved brother about his need for a Savior when he said he cannot believe in a God that would permit evil, death, catastrophes and war. He was hurting in the wake of his wife's mother's passing, so I let it go for a while. Plus, I needed to consult God on the matter because he and I are about as different as two people can be. I prayed for help in putting things into his terms.

He's a computer engineer and operates in a world I'll never understand. However, it hit me, one day, that computers get viruses. Aha!

I called him up and, without referencing God, I asked him how it is that a computer contracts a virus. If you know an engineer, you have learned there are no short, simple answers. Ask what time it is and they'll explain the theory of relativity! Well, he was delighted to explain to me the phenomenon of viruses in surprisingly understandable terms.

He said that that one of the most well-known operating systems is not designed for individual users, like you and me. It's designed for large companies with multiple users on large servers. Since an operating system cannot possibly be all things to all companies, their operating system has "back doors." Programmers can go through these "back doors" and customize the system to do what the company needs it to do based on their particular needs. It may be a tech company, or a

finance firm, or a hotel chain, or a manufacturing operation – each company has specific computing needs and these “back doors” allow programmers access to customize their company’s system.

Okay. So far, so good. “So, where do viruses come from?” I asked.

He said that any computer operating system that allows beneficial customization can also be altered by malicious programmers. He said that programmers can create both GOOD and BAD functions in the operating system. He said that many viruses are actually senior projects designed by students in tech colleges. The assignment is to create an “executable program.” Whether it is a beneficial, or a malicious product is immaterial to their grade. Once those virus programs work on big computers, they can work on yours.

It seemed to me that the Holy Spirit had created a way to link back to his assertion that he could not believe in a God that allows evil, death, war and pestilence. I reminded him of our previous conversation and told him that, God gave us an “operating system” from birth. It was corrupted by man’s original sin. By our sin nature, we are inclined toward evil. We may choose to continue in that corruption, or we may choose to flee from evil. In such a case, we need forgiveness and a renewed heart. We need a Savior.

I explained that, in the same way that a programmer can do either good, or evil things, to a computer, man has been given freedom of choice to love God or love evil. My brother has children, so I asked him how much his children would really love him if they had no choice in the matter. God gave us choice, and then holds HIS grace and mercy out to us to accept or reject. What we call “evil” is the absence of God. Evil people are the consequence of a godless heart.

He remarked that he’d never had it explained that way, before.

So it is with America. As citizens, we have the right to choose. We can choose leaders that pursue truth and who support our constitution, or we can choose leaders who seek to alter the constitution and change the American ways of life. It's entirely up to us. God has, from the creation of the earth, given mankind choices in how we run things. We can cling to God, obey His Word, and follow His Son, or we can follow the promises and lusts of this world. In either case, we will receive the exact consequences of each choice.

Judges 2:10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

As mentioned in a previous installment of this series, currently about 40% of Americans supposedly favor a change in America's fundamental structure and want a more 'utopian' design. We've discussed how social changes and cults have lured people away from Godly living. Remember, it's a choice.

OK, let's see what this 'utopia' looks like. The roadmap for this utopia is called a lot of things, but its design has not changed from the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. The skeleton inside every utopian plan is the same. In 1948, Karl Marx put modern English terminology and some structure to this plan in the form of his "Communist Manifesto."

"From a historical point of view, communism isn't a doctrine belonging to modern society. In fact, Karl Marx described the concept of primitive communism when he discussed hunter-gatherer societies." www.LearningMind.com

Keep in mind that communism promises the SAME THING sung about in Lennon's song; "Imagine." (If you did not receive the last installments of this series, please request them). Communism promises the desires of

the human heart, prosperity, equality, justice, freedom from individual responsibility....all through a social structure. Let's read:

Ten Planks of The Communist Manifesto:

1. Abolition of private property ownership and the application of all money from rent to be applied to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels (rebels are defined by the government).
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transportation in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State.
8. Equal liability of all to labor (everyone must work equally).
Establishment of Industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in government schools.

On its surface, communism is especially attractive to young people who own nothing, and who are looking at a lifetime of work. The lure of the big society is cheap transportation, available employment, cheap living, arts and night life, schools, etc. Where does faith in God fit into this picture? Indeed, faith in man has replaced it.

Know what? Communism was also attractive to the pilgrims who first settled in this land. Let's see how it worked out.

When our earliest founders were fleeing communistic regimes in other countries, they arrived in a wilderness with nothing but what they could carry in their hands. Their first winter claimed many lives as survival was their main focus. Early on, they met to determine how they could possibly endure such harsh conditions. The idea of a socialist model was adopted. Those who grew crops would bring the harvest to the center of the village and all would share. Those who hunted, fished, gathered, etc., likewise were to bring their bounty to be shared by all.

It did not take long before this small group became divided in two; those who worked, and those who did not. The providers found that their greatest efforts were diluted amongst those who did not produce. Those who did not produce were happy to take in what they had not earned. The problem with this model was that ALL WERE EQUALLY POOR and life was not improving.

A new model was adopted in which those who produced either kept their bounty, or traded it for other goods or services. Those who were less productive either got with the program, or became hirelings of those who produced. In so doing, EVERYONE'S standard of living dramatically improved. This model has endured throughout America's history: Capitalism.

Now, some may say; 'didn't the early Christian church follow a model of socialism?' Let's see:

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so

powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

It sure looks like this is the biblical model, if this is the only account you read. But, consider the context. These new believers were establishing a church. They dedicated themselves fully, even their earthly possessions, to this goal. They were building a church where none existed. This communal sharing is not commanded as a way of life, other than generosity that springs out of compassion.

18. Galatians 6:6 Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

19. 1 John 3:17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion how can God's love be in that person?

Psalms 68:5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.

Exodus 22:21-24 "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Indeed, most of the scriptural passages along this line are focused on compassion and giving to those in need, not on living in a communistic

or socialistic model. In our Acts passage, it was an extraordinary effort to plant a church, and those involved gave all they had to that end.

Several in our congregation participated in the 15-week course; “Perspectives.” It was a seminary level course on the world Christian movement from the first century to today. One of the great lessons learned through the centuries of missionary works has been that, in taking the Gospel to those in physical need, the Gospel should always be front and center. If a man cannot hold his head up, he must be fed and cared for, but the Christian missionary dare not let that be the only purpose of being there.

If only poverty is relieved, it can facilitate the social cycles that produce it. Decades of sending food and medicines into the poorest countries in Africa have largely helped those governments put MORE resources toward their militaries – which are starving the citizens in the first place. If, however, the church is planted along with humanitarian efforts, the church body prospers in the Gospel, and their physical prosperity tends to increase as well. Just look at the coffee business Steve and Kelly Marks described to us recently. Most of the missionaries that taught in Perspectives told of improved lifestyles as the church grew.

2 Corinthians 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Galatians 5: 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5: 13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh ; rather, serve one

another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The lesson is clear; do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Do not let your freedom lead you away from Christ. Our freedom to seek comfort, to indulge in pleasure, to find the easy path can lead us into a life of compromise and idolatry as the Old Testament Hebrews demonstrated so many times.

America is a nation founded by Godly people seeking a land in which the freedom to worship is valued and protected. Today, we have the freedom to preserve and protect it, or let it be destroyed. We are a representative republic; meaning that we elect our representatives. Be sure to test them well.

Remember the Law of Non-Contradiction. If two disagree, at least one of them is lying. Let the disagreement cause you to test and confirm. Do not be misled by smooth words that appeal to emotions.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

This ends our series. I pray it's been a blessing to you. Until next week...

Our Father, who art in heaven

Hallowed by thy name!

Amen