

# ***godforsaken***

***'Everything hidden will be  
disclosed.'***

(Luke 8:17)

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To You

## Introduction

*'God, don't leave us here!'*

My friend, Brian, had whispered this prayer the night before. Just outside his door there had been a violent, cold-blooded fight. Many against one, kicking the young guy unconscious.

Brian's one line resonated with my soul. It expressed my own heart's cry at many times, with many feelings of fear in this world. After hearing Brian put this cry into words, it was a prayer I whispered many times after that.

It's OK to pray like this. It's OK to *feel* like this. Prayers in the Bible press even harder:

***'How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?'*** (Psalm 13:1)

In this short book I am trying to pause, and allow myself to feel the pain, the sorrow, and so understand a little better, appreciate a little deeper, the rescue of God.

1.

***‘Jesus said, ‘Everything hidden will be disclosed.’*** (Luke 8:17)

Jesus had many followers, but he selected twelve of them for special ministry and sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> Four of those twelve wrote an account of the life and teaching of Jesus, and we call those four accounts after their names: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. *(These short accounts in the Bible are often called the four Gospels)*

Each of these contain many of the same stories and teachings, just from the perspective of the different authors. A little bit like if four journalists all saw and heard the same events, and then all wrote about them.

Matthew and Luke tell about Jesus speaking about *‘light’*. Matthew tells it this way, as Jesus was speaking to his followers:

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:12-16

***'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'*** (Matthew 5:14-16)

This passage is often referenced when encouraging followers of Jesus to be open about it, honest about it, and allow the light of truth, of faith, to be known.

But Luke writes this:

***'No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.'*** (Luke 8:16-18)

In Luke's account he seems to highlight another truth of God – a truth that pervades Scripture start to finish: *God sees everything, everyone, and will judge.*

This is sobering. This shakes me sometimes. We are told this:

***'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.'***

(2 Corinthians 5:10)

Jesus also started one teaching in this powerful way:

***'When I come in glory, and all the angels with me, I will sit on my glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before me, and I will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...'*** (Matthew 25:31-32)

This story is often called, *'The Sheep and the Goats.'* It is *not* called *'The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats,'*

because it's *not* a parable – i.e. a symbolic story with meaning. It's literal.

Now, when we look again at Luke's account about the 'light', he ends that short teaching with: ***'Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.'*** (vs.18)

We see that the judgment of Christ is all-consuming, no in-between spaces. Those being saved will be completely saved. Those being lost, will be lost completely.

2.

***'Despair lies not in growing weary of what you hate, but in growing weary of what you love.'*** (GK Chesterton)

I saw a young mom the other day, getting her young kids out on a healthy walk. She had a skip in her step, a sense of purpose about her. I found myself pondering what it was, exactly, driving this sense of purpose. This outing had the feeling of intention, inspiration. It was not a desperate event to pass time, which also exists, and is another consideration; this was an *accomplishment*.

Accomplishing what, exactly? This is what I found myself wondering.

In a split second – as often a whole 'reflection' processes in our hearts and minds – I wondered about all these same 'accomplishments' in my own life, in everyone's life: What is the actual motivation and inspiration, that drives us to accomplish anything? We often *create* a project so that we can achieve it – like making a puzzle. We dump all the pieces out, and then proceed to put



them all back together. And at the end of a long day, or week, when we put that last piece in the puzzle, there is a sense of accomplishment. We gaze on it a while, and then a few days later we disassemble it – 500, 1000, 5000 pieces – and put it back in the box, and put the box back on the shelf. It's not on the shop shelf anymore, it's on my shelf. But it is in the exact same state as it was on the shop shelf. In the interim, however, between shelves, it fulfilled many moments in my days that felt like accomplishment, even purpose.

*Is this all futile?*

Well, no, not if we take into consideration other very deep and spiritual aspects of life. But, if we don't allow for other spiritual truths, and we just look at the bald facts of activity, well, it does look futile. It is futile. And we would have to forgive a person if they were ignorant of life's other truths that speak to meaning, and were overcome by a sense of the inane when making the puzzle that is day-to-day life.

Thank God human 'reason' – i.e. the bald facts - is only one facet of life's

fabric! Thank God that God made reason a slave to truth, even a servant of the soul. It is lesser. It needs to bend, even break and be trained to serve its holy purpose. On its own, however, if given more jurisdiction than it was made for, human reason and reasoning will drag a heart down to the grave, to the shadows, even to suicide. It will tell us that we are doing little more in life than making beds in a burning house.

***‘Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become ‘fools’ so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight.’***  
(1 Corinthians 3:18-19)

Scripture teaches us that mankind’s reason is mankind’s source of pride, even source of sin. Right back at the beginning of time, in the ‘*Garden of Eden*’ – the first three chapters of the Bible – mankind ‘thought’ that they could be ‘**like god**’ if they ate from the ‘**tree of knowledge**’.

We say, ‘*Knowledge is power!*’ – and often, in world terms, it is. It is usually

power to lord it over other people of lesser knowledge. We see this in the school playground, kids exerting arrogance and cruelty over other kids who don't know as much or can't think or talk as quickly as they can. Knowledge – the power to bully the simple, the innocent.

And then there's the marriage of knowledge to money, power of another kind, or really just another currency. It is power to have at the expense of others – others' labor, others' lack, others' vulnerability. Look at the world as it stands today. *Really look at it!* I wear clothes that are made thousands of miles away by slaves. I drink coffee picked by slaves. I eat fruit and vegetables right here in the USA picked by illegal immigrants only thirty minutes from where I live, who are underpaid and maltreated. I eat in restaurants where the dishes are washed by illegal immigrants – exploited and poor and often 'touched' and sexually abused by their employers and traffickers – and they stand and work only meters away from where I eat and drink and laugh.

***‘God says, ‘And you say the way of the Lord is unjust? Is it not your ways, O mankind, that are unjust?’***  
(Ezekiel 18:25)

Don't let this offend you! And don't despair! We have good news – even *great* news – given to us by God himself for the lowly among us. Rather than despair, let's hear what God has done, what he's said, what he promises those we have abused, and what he calls us to do!

We live in a world where it is impossible to not have blood on our hands. *Impossible!* We have removed much slavery and abuse from the sight of the consumer, but it is only a few links in the chain away. A gang across the border kidnap a young girl, or even worse, her family sell her to them, and she is used for pornography and self-satisfaction by you, by me, here in the US. Because of our consumption, our demand and use of that product, other companies advertise on the website and pay big money for the exposure... And so we are driving the abuse, the rape and pillage, a few miles away. We are the paying customer. We demand it!

You have blood on your hands, from the food you eat to the sin you indulge. So do I. We stand together, shoulder to shoulder, before God.

This world is god-forsaken because we cast God out of it.

3.

***'Come, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they are red as crimson, I will make them as wool.'***  
(Isaiah 1:18)

Our reason can find no purpose, create no purpose. It tries to, it thinks it can, but it can't. Reason can't think up a reason.

But the 'reason' of God is not like human reason. God's 'reason' has his Spirit in it, his eternal life and eternal love. His reason, as it were, comes to us with the irrational, the humanly impossible. God says his reason takes a blood stain and makes it white as snow.

Let's listen to what God has said, what he has done, to show us the way of life. This is God's story, his 'reason':

God created heaven and earth. He created humans and animals and air and sea and color and emotion and taste and joy. He put eternity in the hearts of people. He made them in his own image.

Being in God's image, God made us with a choice to love, to be in relationship with God, to live forever. God has choice to love, and he gave mankind choice to love. But we as people chose to go our own way, to defy God's rule, his lead, and we walked from his Spirit, from his life. This turning away is called 'sin', and its path is cruelty and death.

Through prophets and power God revealed himself to mankind over the ages, accounted for in the writings of Scripture. And then, in keeping with the prophecies, God breathed himself into man – Jesus Christ.

Jesus brought heaven to earth, eye to eye. He touched us, walked with us, wept with us. And then in his ultimate purpose and expression of love, he took our sin on his own soul, and died at our hands, a cruel death. A death that embodied and reflected mankind's choice from the beginning of time – to reject God.

But having taken our sin on himself, Jesus rose up from death. He defeated death. *He paid for sin and defeated*

*death!* And again he offers us a choice:  
His blood for our blood stains.

He offers to wash us white as snow and  
give us eternal life.

***‘Jesus Christ destroyed death and  
brought life and immortality to light.’***  
(2 Timothy 1:10)



4.

***‘The Lord said, ‘Go throughout the city and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.’ (Ezekiel 9:4)***

Jesus opposed evil. He stood against sin of all kind. Jesus spoke to the crowd and said that anger in the heart was the same as murder, and lust in the heart the same as adultery.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus did miracles with the purpose of people repenting of sin and believing in him for forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> He did not just do miracles for momentary blessing. Once Jesus explicitly said:

***‘I heal you so that you know I have power to forgive sin.’ (Luke 5:24)***

We live in a dark world, where dark deeds are done. Jesus warned us, as we considered from Luke 8, that everything hidden will be laid bare before him and judged.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 11:21

As a people with blood on our hands, stained to the core and from the core, God calls us to attention. He does not call us to cleanse ourselves, because we cannot. He calls us to lift our eyes to him for cleansing.

We looked at the story of God, his history and his person, Jesus Christ. Like a parent who finds a bereft child or an animal caught in a snare, we have been found by God. He has come to us.

***‘His name will be Jesus, because he will save people from their sin... He will be called Immanuel, which means, ‘God with us.’***

(Matthew 1:21-23)

We are called to ‘repent’ of our sin. We are not called to cleanse ourselves. We are called to repent, which means to turn away, turn around, or even change our way of thinking.

***‘Jesus said, ‘Repent and believe!’***

(Mark 1:15)

Think about it. When we find someone down a long road of bad choices, we really just need them to stop. Stop

where you are. Turn around. Walk a new path. We don't expect them to undo everything they have done. That's not possible. But we *do* expect them to walk a new road, start a new chapter, go a different direction.

Jesus calls us to repent, turn, go a new way. And he is the Way! He is the path!

***'Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.'*** (John 14:6)

We cannot undo what we have done, but he can. He can cover our sin, remove a stain we put there. He paid with his own blood for the authority, the power, to pay for our sin. Our past we must allow him to 'undo'. Our present and future is for us to walk a new path – *his* path.

***'The blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of murder.'***  
(Hebrews 12:24)

5.

***‘Jesus cried out, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’***

(Matthew 27:46, Psalm 22:1)

In the face of suffering, we often question – *‘Where was God?’* This is a legitimate cry of the soul. Jesus himself, in his own suffering, cried out that God had forsaken him.

Although this is a legitimate question, even a healthy cry, I don’t believe any man can legitimately *answer* it. Only God can – and will – answer it.

Your suffering is holy ground. It is a sacred space where God will meet you, heal you, and he will judge your aggressor.

***‘Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the Lord almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays... You will***

***trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,' says the Lord almighty.'*** (Malachi 4:1-3)

Jesus wept with people in their pain. He often, through faith and power, would heal the person, or heal the one they loved, but he would not explain the pain away, or give a reason for why it happened in the first place. If we don't have the power of God to fix the situation, we don't have the authority of God to speak about it. We can, however, weep with people:

***'Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.'***  
(Romans 12:15)

Things we can be sure of and share with the hurting, are the following:

1. Full healing of the heart and body will come in Jesus Christ.

***'Jesus said, 'I am making all things new!''*** (Revelation 21:5)

2. There will come a day when no pain, suffering, tears or mourning will exist in

our minds, our memories, or even our history!

***'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*** (Revelation 21:4)

3. Judgement will fall on those who hurt you and sinned against you.

***'We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.'***  
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

4. Jesus himself felt – and cried out publicly – that he had been forsaken by God.

*(see above verses, Matthew 27:46 and Psalm 22:1)*

5. Man – and not God – sinned against you. God will avenge you!

***'Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.'***  
(Romans 12:19)

6.

***'The Lord has shown you, O mortal, what is good. Now what does the Lord require of you? To seek justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.'*** (Micah 6:8)

We can't cleanse ourselves of sin. Jesus did that for us. What we do is turn to him in belief, in repentance, and we walk after him.

In response to being cleansed by God, we are called to pursue the things of God. We are called to grieve evil, and to stand in opposition to sin, as Jesus did. We are called to live a life that seeks justice for the wronged, seeks mercy for the vulnerable, and moves in faith and action with humility.

God has made clear through the ages, through his prophets and their accounts, that the land is god-forsaken because mankind turned his back on God. We are told that the land is full of blood and lust because of our hearts, minds and actions.

God is holy. He is just. He will avenge the victim, he will exalt the poor and disenfranchised. He will reward those who seek God and bow to Christ.

***‘Jesus said, ‘The last will be first!’***  
(Matthew 20:16)



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