

Musings on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 5/22/2018 evening.

Shared with Keith Branson (first two paragraphs) and Cheryl Hill (first two paragraphs and all the rest, below....)

In the Wikipedia article on "Salvation", it says this:

"According to Christian belief, sin as the human predicament is considered to be universal."

Why is sin so universal? Why is it most (Christian) religions make this sinful state of (all?) mankind such a central tenet? Whatever happened to any ideals that mankind has *goodness* in them, as well as sin?

Human beings never have been perfect. Does that imperfection then automatically then equate with human beings being sinful beings? I feel better about saying I am an imperfect creature than saying I am a sinful one. Overcoming sin seems to be out of human control a lot; it is up to God to have been crucified for our sins in order for us to be redeemed? Or atoned? If I have done nothing wrong, what have I to atone for? God knows human beings are never perfect. So, His knowing that, wouldn't He be understanding? Or do we have to pretend that God is not understanding of human imperfections until Jesus Christ comes around and gets crucified? Is God pure judgment of man's sins, or is he forgiving (or better: accepting) of the fact of our imperfections and accepting of the creatures He designed in the first place?

Keith Branson then responded to those two paragraphs above:

A deep topic this evening. We are created good, however we let evil into the world. The question is whether you treat this as a legal issue or a medicinal one. You can guess where I am: sin is a condition we need to be healed from, and the treatment is ongoing. Sin is a reality, but beating oneself up over it isn't helpful. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and even though we're imperfect sinners, loves us completely anyway.

He calls us to Him always, and doesn't look for ways to push us away. We push ourselves away.

The problem is when we equate sin with crime.

Here is the rest that I wrote to Cheryl Hill on Messenger (those two paragraphs above followed directly by this):

It seems clear that with God all things are possible. And it seems that most Christian theology would say that we (sinful?) humans cannot save ourselves; only God can. I like to think there are many good humans who strive ever so much to be good people, knowing that there are bad ways people can be to one another and trying to focus on ways of being good to one another and avoid bad ways of being to one another. Loving. Not murdering. Not stealing. We humans seem to be expected to *do* all these good things, and yet even in so doing, it seems that the key to our salvation is outside of our control? If that is so, why even bother to try to be good?

So is God in love with His created humanity, or is He ashamed of us?

It seems that God is the master; we are the slave? The one proscription that Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book seems to hammer again and again is that we must be *obedient* to God. It seems *obedience* is the most important thing, then all else seems to evolve from that.

It seems human beings were designed from the git-go to have free will, therefore the potential to disobey God. So is it really any wonder that humans having this free will might decide to disobey? Is pure obedience the best thing? What kind of world would we be in if everyone were purely obedient to God?

"... and take up his cross.' Jesus has graciously prepared the way for this word by speaking first of self denial. Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for his sake. If in the end we know only him, if we have ceased to notice the pain of our own cross, we are indeed looking only unto him." – from page 97 of *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

I just kinda wonder: Are we supposed to be masochists for God?

'... 10. All this is important. Yet with this Exhortation I would like to insist primarily on the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to each of us, the call that he also addresses, personally, to you: "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44; cf. 1 Pet 1:16). The Second Vatican Council stated this clearly: "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord – each in his or her own way – to that perfect holiness by which the Father himself is perfect". [10]

'11. "Each in his or her own way" the Council says. We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.[11] Indeed, when the great mystic, Saint John of the Cross, wrote his Spiritual Canticle, he preferred to avoid hard and fast rules for all. He explained that his verses were composed so that everyone could benefit from them "in his or her own way".[12] For God's life is communicated "to some in one way and to others in another".[13] '

-- from Gaudete et Exsultate of March of 2018 by Pope Francis
(http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html).

The end.