

## **From Negative to Positive Believing**

*by Norman Grubb*

We must get rid of our double vision. As long as we see good and evil as two competing powers, our faith will be a see-saw experience. Our seeing and knowing must ultimately be universal. That is the only key to a believing with no kinks in it.

The first principle of faith in action must always be the inner seeing before the believing. In this world full of evil and problems, as humans we will always start by seeing and believing in something that disturbs us, which we call evil. This is negative believing; and what we see inwardly, and therefore believe, is what we outwardly transmit to others. We help it in our looks, words and deeds, for all we share with others is ourselves; and if we see things as evil, we transmit darkness, not light; death, not life.

Is there an alternative? Yes, there is, and that was what settled into me, once I saw God as all. There cannot be two powers, for He is one. But how, then, can I include the workings of an evil power, of which the world and people are so full, as an expression of the one power of God, if He is love?

Turning to the Bible I found the plainest statements, each linking God with evil. Here are some of them. The prophet Isaiah said plainly, *"I am the Lord, and there is none else. I formed the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things"* (45:6,7). That statement is total enough. But there are plenty more.

To Moses God said, *"Who has made the dumb, the deaf, the seeing or the blind?"* (Ex. 4:11). When Jeremiah spoke of God's coming judgment on rebellious Israel, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, he said that God named the heathen king who would destroy them *"Nebuchadnezzar, my servant"*! God also called the Assyrians *"the rod of my anger."* All the destructive plagues of insects that destroyed harvest after harvest in the days of Joel the prophet, God spoke of as *"the locust, the caterpillar, the cankerworm, the palmer worm, my great army which I've sent among you."* There are dozens of such sayings by the prophets.

We all know about Joseph, for he went further. He left no room for us to say that God permits evil things to happen but does not direct them. After he had suffered by being sold as a slave by his brethren, and then thrown into prison by the false accusation of Potiphar's wife, after fourteen years of such treatment, he told his brethren, *"You thought evil against me but God meant it for good."* Meant it! To mean is not merely to permit. It is direct purpose and planning.

Peter, in a startling statement in his speech after Pentecost, referring to the greatest crime in history, told the crowds, *"Jesus of Nazareth . . . Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."* Determinate counsel—there's no possible permissiveness there!

When in those early days of persecution the believers were praying together, they said in their prayer to God, *"For of a truth, against Your holy child, Jesus, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined to be done."* What could be stronger?

Then when Pilate said to Jesus: "Know You not that I have power to crucify You and have power to release You?" Jesus answered, *"You could have no power against Me except it be given you from above"*! From above? We would say, if we believed in two powers, from beneath! But Jesus saw only one power.

At the Last Supper, as Judas left the table to betray Him, Jesus merely said to His disciples, *"The Prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me."* Nothing! For Jesus did not inwardly see him. And when the soldiers were come into the garden to arrest Him, He told Peter, *"Put up your sword in its sheath. The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"* And that cup? Satan taking Him to Calvary.

I had the answer when I saw that a person is only a person because he is free. Therefore, when God created persons in His own image, they could only be persons by being free, as He is free. Plainly, therefore, as we have seen by the history of our human family, that had to include our freedom to take the fruit of the forbidden tree. That freedom, in turn, had to include its tragic consequences, and the sorrows that God, in His faithful love, told Adam and Eve would come to them. In creating persons like Himself who would be able to manage His universe, God had to make them free. He could do nothing else or they would not have been persons. Even as freedom is the necessity of making choices, He therefore created them with the possibility of choosing evil, the opposite of Himself, which they did. In that sense God created evil, because, as we have seen, there cannot be consciousness without opposites.

This does not mean that God is the doer of evil. As Paul said, *"God forbid!"* And James added, *"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man."* He created freedom, and basic to freedom is the possibility of alternative choices. It is in this sense that He created evil.

Satan himself was God's created being, of the highest order. In his freedom he rebelled and founded the kingdom of darkness of which he is the god. But he is still forever God's Satan, and God deliberately used Satan, for instance, to bring Job to the final end of himself (as He uses him in all our lives!). Job is one of the great recorded evidences in the Bible that God is manipulating Satan, not Satan manipulating God (Job 1:8 and 2:3).

Stretch this out, and we find in all human history that we can boldly call Satan "God's convenient agent." We have already explained that if Satan had not first been free to take us the wrong way, we should never now be safely settled in the right way through Christ. So as we watch, we see God continually using evil for good purposes, meaning the evil as a product of our freedom, but using it for His overcoming grace.

In that sense, then, the Bible says that God means the consequences of evil, whether in its corruptions in our personal lives, or in all its horrors of disease, death, disasters, cruelties and "man's inhumanity to man." But to think that God means such as if He is taking pleasure in them is clearly an equal horror. All evil so pierced God's heart that, to redeem us from it, He came in the person of His Son, Himself to be perfected in suffering, right up to *"tasting death for every man."*

In another sense, it is necessary that we recognize that God does mean evil in all its tragedy, and understand why He means it. For only by that recognition can we be firm and strong, and praising, when the storms of evil are blowing around us. If, when this or that hits us, or we or our neighbors live in distressing conditions, we can only say that God | permits it, we seem to imply a weakness in God; or at least we wish He didn't permit such things, as if He is sorry about them, but can't help it because the devil must have his way. There is an element of disturbed questioning in us about a God who sits back, as it were, and leaves the devil free to do his damndest.

But when we have these solid grounds for knowing there is no other way except that we humans must reap our share of the sorrows of life, and that God means exactly what has come to us, we then can see it and can take it in a totally opposite way—as all joy, instead of all horror. For we know this is the negative background for His purposes of perfect love.

All is perfect, and He is working everything out “*after the counsel of His own will.*” It is always “*the good pleasure of His goodness.*”

What a difference this makes to our normal negative headshaking over all that is happening to us in our personal lives, our families and the world. As we have said, we must always start from the negative impact of this world’s discords on us, right in our own emotional responses, and in our family, business, or church relationships. We just don’t like it. We start with the ever-present temptation to simply believe a thing to be evil, which it is to human eyes. We really know we’re off center, because the effect of our negative-believing is at once reflected in an inner disturbance and darkness in us. The frown is on our face! And our temptations turn to quick reactions of temper, impatience, and negative judgmentalism.

By this we learn that in all problems the only real problem is ourselves. It is caused by our negative believing. What we hold, holds us; what we are, we transmit. I always know I am off center when things disturb me, and self-outlook takes the place of Christ-outlook. I always start that way in my negative human reactions. I am tempted to slip back to an independent self-outlook—it is a healthy touch of hell in me.

Now that this wonderful truth has settled into us as total—that all is He and there is no one else, so nothing but God exists—we know that all these disturbances are merely disturbed outer conditions. The inner center is He, whether in things or people. They are disturbed forms of Him and His perfect kingdom of heaven. So the simple truth is that we need to exchange our negative-believing for our positive recognition of Himself in all. It is surprising and humbling to us when we suddenly wake up to how long we often remain in our negatives!

Thus we clearly see that the first way in which the rivers of the Spirit flow out of us is in our change of inner-seeing; for we constantly remember that all we are is spirit, and all that comes out of us is our inner-seeing.

We know we shall always start with negative reactions to things or people, as they appear to us. We cannot be human and do less. But they are the necessary negative background to Him, the Positive, revealing Himself. There is none other in the universe but the Perfect One, and all that is not positively He is a distortion through the devil or through man.

And now we take constant inner practical action. We confront our first negative reactions. We recognize them as negative human outlooks which mistake outer appearance for reality. Though hurt by them, perhaps badly and continually hurt, we from our inner center reverse the inner-seeing. We die to the human outlook, “*bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.*” We cannot immediately change our soul-feelings, but we do change our Spirit-attitude. We affirm all is perfect, however horrible or offensive it may appear. We see Him meaning that situation, or meaning persons to be in their distorted forms; and we see Him at their hidden center—perfect love and perfect power.

We see now with heavenly, not earthly, eyes. We see as He sees. We count the “*diverse trials*” as all joy. We glory in the tribulation. We believe against appearances, accepting the situation and praising Him in it. We repeat this a thousand times in our daily lives, in things large or small, and it turns the distresses of life into daily adventures. He that sits in the heavens “laughs,” and we laugh with Him.

That laughter rings out of us in word or look, and touches our world. “How can this crazy person be happy and thankful in evil circumstances? I wish I could be happy and peaceful in my depressing conditions.” A secret hunger is there. Some come and inquire and ask for help, and we give it to them. We always share what we’ve got; some people get fed and become feeders of others—and so the rivers flow.

So our faith-attitudes give life, even before they become faith-action. *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”* Daily, momentarily, we keep our inner attitudes God-centered in God’s purposes, and life issues from us. This is the pure heart that sees only God, and sees with Him of whom it is said, *“You are of purer eyes than to behold evil”* (Hab. 1:13) It is the thrill of our daily adventure, and within reach of us all in all conditions. And let us remember that nothing holds us. We are only held by our own self-attitudes. If we see evil, and are held by our seeing, we have our inner hells of fear, hate, struggles, pessimism. If we see Him, Who is always perfect goodness in all things, we have our present heaven, and are busy introducing others to it.