

## ***Love cuts the Gordian NOT***

I thought that when I got to 70 (number of articles = age!) that was probably going to be it, but yesterday I started thinking about **original sin**. Would God (**could** God?!) exclude a baby that ‘dies in sin’? So I looked up on Google to see what scriptures people used to support the idea.

Then, as I awoke this morning after a restless night, I also started to think of some other issues that I might need to tackle in future. I’ll list some of them for you, but please don’t pay too much attention to them because I had yet another penny-drop moment and leapt out of bed to write about it. So here is my list:

Original sin? – What’s the issue? If a baby dies, will it be saved or **NOT**? This led to thoughts of:

Infant baptism? – Does baptism save you or **NOT**? If so, can a baby be saved by baptism or **NOT**? A huge one! My knowledge of church history isn’t good, but weren’t Christians killing each other at one stage over infant baptism? Seriously?! Is that what Christians were doing?! Unbelievable!

Unforgiveable sin? ‘*but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.*’ (Mark 3:29) Is there a sin that can definitely exclude you, or **NOT**? For example, is suicide an unforgiveable sin, or **NOT**?

Apostasy? ‘*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened ... and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.*’ (Heb 6:4-6) Once you have you believed, if you then turn away, is it possible subsequently to be saved or **NOT**?

My penny-drop moment, at a stroke, cut through all these Gordian **NOT**s!

In all those issues, what are we asking? ‘Is such and such a person in or out? Are they saved or not?’ So what does Jesus say? Here’s one familiar example:

*Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them – do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”* (Luke 13:1-5)

I think Jesus is saying, ‘Stop worrying about **them**! Are **you** relating in love to your heavenly Father?!’

And not quite the same, I know, but as it’s Easter let’s look at Peter being recommissioned by Jesus: ‘Do you love me?’ Peter is asked three (annoying) times! And Peter’s response?

*Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”* (Jn 21:20-22)

We just can’t stop ourselves doing it, can we? ‘Yes, but what about him?!’

It's the same with all those issues above – it's all about 'them'. We're like a load of kids arguing about 'He had more than me', 'I was playing with it first', 'It's not fair! She's had two and I've only had one.'

All the time we want to argue (from the scriptures, of course!) who is in and who is out, who is saved and who is not. And all God wants to say is, 'You duffers! I love you all, equally.' And because God loves us so desperately, it's never, ever, ever too late for **anyone** to turn back to God. You know that God is absolutely **NOT** going to reject **anyone** at **any stage**, if they come back and say, 'Father I have sinned and am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men' – and before you've got even half of your prepared speech out, God's grabbed you, kissed you, hugged you and is throwing a party!

**THAT** is the kind of God that Jesus came to show us! So why the hell do we waste so much time and energy arguing about these secondary issues?! We can hardly blame our spouses or other family members who don't want to know about the church – they can see plainly what a total and utter waste it is to argue about that list of things I mentioned (and more besides).

But they do love **you** and they do relate to **you** – of course they do! It's not the (organised) church that is going to reach them with Jesus' love; it's you! So pray and pray and pray to be filled with the fruit of the Spirit. Enjoy spending time with them. And trust your loving heavenly Father to draw them in, even if it's at the very last minute. And actually, if you're relaxed about all this, and they can see that you don't give a monkey's for all these arguments, it's more and more likely that they'll open up to God's love sooner, and not wait until the very last minute.

That's on an individual basis, but surely it's the same on an organised church basis. If one church is always on about who's in and who's out, whether you've given your life to Jesus or not, and another church is always on about God's wonderful, all-encompassing love, I think even I can work out which of those two churches will attract people into God's loving embrace!

*Lord, please let it be so among us!*

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