

Monday, December 31 – *“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” (Exodus 20:5)* There you have it, plain and simple. God will punish your children’s, children’s, children because of your sin. This is the beginning of what will become known as the retribution theory. It will develop into a belief that everything bad that happens to you, happens because of either your sin or your family’s sin. (Sound familiar?) The problem is that to make this leap in understanding you have to ignore the context of what God is saying. This is an explanation of the second commandment which states that we shall make no idols for us to worship. The context of you and your descendants being condemned by a jealous God is the fact that you and your descendants don’t believe in the aforementioned God in the first place. So, of course there will be punishment. Anyone who makes the decision not to believe in God separates themselves from the love, grace and forgiveness of God. No retribution here, just consequences.

Happy New Year! – *“The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them. (Ezekiel 18:20)* Fast forward a few thousand years since yesterday’s devotion. There are consequences for your sin, but these consequences are reserved for you and not for your descendants. Now, we have all the ingredients for the retribution theory. If something bad happens to you, it is simply the consequence of your sin. Next logical step in reasoning? You must have sinned because something bad has happened in your life. This perspective, born between 550 and 600BC, becomes the norm for life in Israel. This perspective is refuted by Jesus in about 30AD, but still holds true today. Think about it, the last time you heard of something bad happening in someone’s life, did you wonder what they did to deserve it? This is a matter of perspective and Jesus is in the business of changing perspectives.

Wednesday, January 2 – *“Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” (John 14:10)* These are the words of Jesus. When he speaks, God speaks. When he acts, God acts. Jesus came in order to fulfill what God has always intended to be. Jesus didn’t come to do God’s will, he came to be God’s will. In him we see, hear and experience what God has always intended for his creation. Gone are the days of the law, for nobody can be righteous enough to be saved. Enter a new perspective, salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. This reality requires us to ask different questions. Stop asking what someone has done in order to deserve such a bad thing happening to them and start asking what God can do in them and through them in spite of the bad thing that has happened to them.

Thursday, January 3 – *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)* This is your new perspective for 2019. Maybe you have adopted this perspective in the past, but have lost it along the way. We are so quick to assign blame, to look for any and all reasons for why something has happened. The problem is that too many times we truly don’t know why something has happened. Thus, God has given us a new perspective that will allow us to overcome any and all things. Our question is no longer, “Why has this happened?” Our New Year’s resolution for 2019 is to ask, “What can God do with what has happened?” This is a matter of perspective and Jesus is in the business of changing perspectives.

Friday, January 4 – *“Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort that we ourselves receive from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4)* Perspective changer: God comforts us so that we can comfort others. Think about it, from where did your comfort come the last time you needed comfort? I am willing to bet that it didn’t float down from the heavens and land on you while you were driving your car or eating dinner. I bet that your comfort came from someone in your life. God uses each one of us to be his hands, arms, legs and voice. We get to comfort others with the very same comfort that we have received from God. Life is going to happen and when it does we need each other. We don’t need each other to assign blame or to explain why something has happened. We need each other for a shoulder to cry on, a hand up and encouragement to keep on keeping on.

Retribution Theory –

The difference is in the _____.

Stop asking the “_____?” questions.

Start asking “_____...?” questions

Jesus is in the business of _____!