

Against Evil

by: Ronald L. Dart

I remember when they were searching high and low across Iraq for one Saddam Hussein. I remember fervently wishing that they would capture him alive. I thought trying him in a war crimes trial might be a good thing. Never let it be said that I don't admit being wrong from time to time, because after watching reports of the man's trial, I found myself wishing that they had just rolled a hand grenade into his spider hole and identified him by the remains.

Sometimes evil has to be dealt with harshly and finally or it will find a way to win even in defeat. Now how can that possibly be? It's a reasonable question. I'll try to answer it from both a biblical and a secular perspective. Mind you, I am assuming that we know we've got our man, we know what he's done, and there's really no doubt about either. Saddam, for example, should have had a dead or alive warrant out for him. Such a warrant asserts that a man is guilty and deserving of death. Look at the matter from a practical point of view. Through this whole period of reconstruction in Iraq, a subtle fear of that man still pervaded that society. I think people were afraid to rat out terrorists for fear that one day Saddam Hussein would be back and they would be dead, or worse. Failing to deal firmly, finally, and quickly with a man like Saddam Hussein encouraged the belief that Americans won't act, that we're not strong enough to deal with evil. The trial of Saddam Hussein was arguably a waste of time, and the end result of his execution would have been the same whether he was executed earlier or later. But, in the delay, an impression of weakness was conveyed across the Middle East and people were emboldened against the United States.

Let's play a little mind game here. Imagine that we are writing a novel that proceeds on the assumption that, when the Iranian students invaded the American Embassy in Tehran and held the whole staff hostage, Jimmy Carter reacted differently than he did. Imagine that he brought two of America's big fleets to the shores of Iran—aircraft carriers, troop carriers, the works—say 100,000, 200,000 troops, Army and the Marines. Then imagine that Congress, as it really should have done, declared that, since the American Embassy was invaded and the American Embassy is considered American soil, Iran had engaged in an act of war against the United States. Therefore, from the day they took the hostages, a state of war existed between Iran and the United States. Remember, we're writing this back in the days of Jimmy Carter's presidency—not now—when the Middle East was in a rather different situation. Then imagine that the president of these United States had issued an ultimatum to the government of Iran on the basis of the congressional resolution: Release safe and unharmed all

Americans held in Iran and do so immediately. Failure to do so will result in American troops coming into Iran to bring them out. Or, if necessary, to bring out their bodies. If they are harmed, we will also bring out the bodies of the responsible government officials, starting with the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Looking at this in today's circumstances, you can easily see that the American people simply aren't ready to do that sort of thing. And the entire Muslim world is persuaded that we would never, ever do such a thing. But we're imagining what the world would look like if they really believed we would issue an ultimatum exactly like that. Imagine that we began overflights of the Iranian mainland with fully armed fighter and bomber aircraft. Now, how would your novel proceed at this point? Dead hostages? Very possible. But, you see, we as a nation can't afford to let evil men think we are afraid to fight and die. They need to believe that taking hostages won't work. The Israelis adopted this policy a long time ago. They came to the place where they announced to the world that hostages are immediately considered soldiers and they may get killed. No one is going to buy them out. The enemy needs to believe that we will go and get them if we have to, and that they will fervently wish we had not.

In almost any scenario you can imagine, the government of Iran would be very different than it is today if this scenario had played out. It's entirely possible the whole atmosphere in the Middle East would have been different. The Afghan and the Iraq wars might not have been necessary at all if we had reacted with strength—overwhelming strength—and (I'm sorry, brace yourself for the word) with total brutality at that moment in time when Iran gave us the excuse. But now the Iranian government believes, based on statements by our congressmen on the floor of Congress and by reading the American press, that we will not act against them, that we are afraid to fight and die, that we worry ourselves sick over casualties. If they killed six American soldiers, they think that we would fold up our tents and go off into the desert. That's what they tell their people. That's what they tell themselves around their campfires at night. And why shouldn't they believe this? This is the overwhelming impression they get from American newspapers, news magazines, and television.

Now let's go back to Saddam Hussein. The man was evil through and through. A hand grenade in the hole would have been a merciful end for that man. If not that, a quick trial before a military tribunal and a public hanging would have gotten it over with and the whole atmosphere in Iraq might well be different today because people would have been certain that the man was not coming back. Any man as possessed of evil as Saddam Hussein was, had to have been in torment inside and the quicker he was done with it, the better for him. I found an interesting ally in my point of view on this. His name was Winston Churchill. From an article that appeared not long ago in the *Washington Times Weekly*, it seems that the

British had declassified many of Churchill's papers going back to World War II. Chris Hastings, writing in the *London Sunday Telegraph*, had this to say about it. He said, "Official documents declassified for the turn of the new year revealed that Churchill was opposed to allied plans for war crimes trials. He wanted summarily to execute leading Nazi figures, including Hitler, who[m] he regarded as the mainspring of evil and a gangster."

And, candidly, looking back in history, I can see why he felt that way. He wanted to put an end to the evil. And, not just put an end to it, he wanted it to be dead, so it could not continue to dominate the news week after week, month after month, following the end of the war. He felt that the sooner these evil men were eradicated from the face of the earth, the better off the earth would be. That they were endangering, they were polluting, they were corrupting, even while in prison. On July 6, 1942, according to his notes, the prime minister said this, "Contemplate that if Hitler falls into our hands, we shall certainly put him to death. Not a sovereign who could be said to be in hands of ministers, like Kaiser. This man is the mainspring of evil. Instrument— electric chair, for gangsters, no doubt available on lend-lease." That last thing about lend-lease must have had a tinge of sarcasm in it. He figured the Americans would lend him the electric chair for Hitler and he was, of course, quite right about that, although we might have been just as happy to have lent him a rope. Britain did have a history of hanging criminals. Brooks' notes, made public by the National Archives, revealed Churchill to be a ruthless commander who was "prepared to override moral and legal considerations to defeat Germany." Now, that was a judgment of the author. That Churchill was ruthless I don't have any question, because it required a ruthless man to win that war. But then we have to ask ourselves, when he said, "override moral and legal considerations," what did he mean by "moral"? What makes something moral or immoral?

On July 7, 1943, Churchill argued passionately that leading Nazis who fell into British hands should have been treated as outlaws and shot rather than put on trial. He said, "I suggested that the U.N. draw up a list of 50 or so who would be declared as outlaws by the 33 nations. Those not on the list might be induced to rat! If any of those are found by advancing troops, the nearest officer of brigade rank should call a military court to establish identity and then should execute without higher authority." That would really have dealt with the problem. The papers also show that he was willing to bump off Nazi Heinrich Himmler and shoot German prisoners of war should Germany begin doing the same to British prisoners. Sometimes you have got to be able to convince your enemy that you are as serious as he is.

Churchill understood that evil had to be brutally suppressed or it would arise again and again like a poisonous weed. So did Harry Truman, who cauterized the evil sore in Japan with two nuclear devices. And hardly anyone in the modern world has a clue how evil that sore was. Before you criticize, you should inform yourself about what was going on in

China, in Asia, and in Japan before Pearl Harbor in 1941. Japan is a very different nation today than it would have been if Harry Truman had lacked the nerve to do what he did. I think men like Churchill, who struggled against an evil man like Hitler all his life, cannot be unaffected by the struggle. And I began to understand why Winston Churchill did not want the war crimes trials. He wanted it over. A military tribunal, a summary execution, gets the evil off the table, out of the room, and out of the news. But, that need not preclude a thorough investigation of the crimes after the fact. In fact, serious researchers, serious investigation, and books published about this stuff in the years that followed might have been even more effective in the long run.

The bizarre trials of men like Saddam Hussein, or Zacarias Moussaoui, here in this country, grant an impossible dignity to such evil men. In the case of Moussaoui, he actually enjoyed the accounts of the evil he conspired to do—smiling, chuckling, and actually being quite happy about the deaths, the suffering, and the pain that were caused. It would have been far better to have put him before a military tribunal and to have hanged him forthwith. Now, in answer to the obvious objection that this is not a very Christian thing to do, maybe not. But let's get some things straight: You can't rule out prayer in the public schools, take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance, force God out of the public square, claim that there is no way that this is a Christian nation, and then turn around and insist that our foreign policy operate on Christian principles. Do I have this wrong? If we're not a Christian nation, if we're going to be governed by utilitarian principles as some people want to do, then common sense would suggest that we should just get rid of evil men as expeditiously as possible. The best thing for the world is for them to die quickly and violently.

On the other hand, perhaps we should inquire as to whether we have our Christian caps on straight. The Christian faith is founded, not only on Jesus, but on the law and the prophets of the Old Testament as well, and most Christians, including Paul, see Christ in the history of Israel and even see Christ as the giver of the law. The Christian faith never had to deal with issues like this, because the early Christians were never in power. You might have to underline that in your mind: The early Christians were never in power and, therefore, some of these questions never came before them. But the principle was addressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans, which I think may have been written in his concern for the way some Christians were conducting themselves and bringing down unnecessary trouble on their heads from the government. In the letter to the Romans he said, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13-1-2)." He was talking about being subject to the state. Of course, it goes without saying, he meant as long as you don't have to disobey Christ in the process. He said, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have

praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil "(Romans 13:3-4). Now this is about as Christian as you can get. In Romans 13:4, he said that the civil government is a minister, a servant of God, to execute wrath on people—like Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein. And, I might add, the quicker they are executed, the better for everyone.

As Christians we are led by the Holy Spirit and the responsibility of government, particularly the bearing of the sword, makes some of us uncomfortable. But, God is in no way different than he was in ancient days. Our hearts and our consciences should be informed from the Bible, and we should draw a sharp line between what we may do as private individuals and what we must do if called on to govern. As individuals (Paul made it clear) we must not seek private vengeance. As officers of the state we must seek vengeance on behalf of all those who are oppressed. You don't find much about that in the New Testament because the church was being oppressed then; it had nothing to do with government. Now we are in a different world and a different time, where our government is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And a lot of the people here claim to be Christians.

There were two men who faced a similar problem in ancient times. They had an historic enemy who would never leave them in peace—not in a million years. Peace treaties made with these people were worthless, utterly meaningless. They were the Amalekites and, if I may say so, they were the Palestinians of that day. You'll find the story in 1 Samuel 15. Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." This makes a lot of Christians uncomfortable and it's easy to see why. At the same time, we see in our newspapers and on television every day why such instructions might be given. This was a punitive expedition and Israel was not allowed to take spoils from these people. They couldn't take away a camel, they couldn't take away a sheep, they couldn't take away anything. Everything was to be wiped out. This expedition would serve three purposes: 1) It would, once and for all, put an end to the Amalekite problem. It would cauterize the running sore these people formed on the face of the earth. 2) It would serve as an example to any others who would live and act as the Amalekites did. And, 3) It would be an example of justice for Israel and for the world at large, and justice is one of the fundamental values of God's economy.

So, the battle was joined. They fought, they killed the men, women, children, but spared of all people, Agag, the king. Well named—Agag. The best of the sheep they also kept, all the best oxen, fatlings, lambs; everything that was good they kept. They only destroyed what was vile and refuse. They made two serious errors there: 1) Some foolish idea of mercy toward the primary evildoer in Amalek led them to kill man, woman, and child and yet spare the Hitler of the day. 2) Greed caused them to corrupt the very point of the mission. They were supposed to be doing the justice of God; not making themselves rich. Saul faced the terrible duty and flinched. Samuel did not. And, of course, he seriously corrected Saul, and this was the point where Saul was finally rejected from being king over Israel. Because the head of state would not do his duty, it was left to the man of God to do it for him. After his rebuke to King Saul, “Then Samuel said bring Agag, the king of the Amalekites here to me. So Agag came to him delicately...” (1 Samuel 15:32). The King James version of this uses the word “delicately.” I don’t know why, but basically it means he came to him charmingly. “Agag said surely the bitterness of death is passed.” And then he was trying to ingratiate himself. Other translations translate the word “cautiously.” I don’t think so. I think this evil man thought that he could win after all.

You know, men who talked with Hermann Goering in the days before the Nuremberg Trials describe him as alternately vain and arrogant, and then he could just turn on the charm. This was a man who would have, if he hadn’t committed suicide, been hanged not long after this. It’s a crying shame he was hanged before he ever got a chance to turn on the charm. Goering was as evil as the rest of them and the longer he was allowed to live, the more likely he thought it was that he might win. I think Agag thought he could charm his way out of this. “And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal” (v. 33). This was a prophet folks; not a head of state. If the Amalekites were the Palestinians of the day, Agag was the Yasser Arafat of that day. A recent biographical sketch of Ariel Sharon noted that he gave his word to the American government that he would not kill Arafat. Sharon keeping his word was a good thing, but the blood of many people is on American hands today because our government interfered in the Israelis’ rightful duty to rid the earth of that evil man. Arafat deserved to die, and letting him live prolonged the evil in Israel and allowed the situation become what it is today—a situation the Israelis should never have had to face in the first place. I realize that what I’m saying will scandalize a lot of folks who think that a Christian teacher should not say such things. Well, if our secular government will not do its duty, who is left to say it? I’m not a prophet like Samuel, so all I can do is tell you what the prophets said. I can tell you what the prophets did. And I believe an American prophet would have told our government long ago to butt out of that side of Israeli-Palestinian affairs and mind their own business. We in this country have been left in peace so long that we have lost touch with what the rest of the world has to live with.

Now there's another question that comes naturally to mind. What role does Satan play in all of this? Was Hitler demon-possessed? This is something that bothers a lot of people. They really wonder if a demon was involved. Was a demon the source of evil for Saddam and Arafat? I don't know, but let me point out a few things to think about. If you look back in the Old Testament you find practically nothing about demon possession. In the New Testament the demons you encounter are mostly inept, depressed, ineffective—in a sense, they're just crazy. And, you know, human evil in the end may turn out to be the most dangerous evil of all. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in the last letter of his life, "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3). He then went on to describe the rotten character of modern man. And, finally, he said in verse 13, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." What an incredible description of the time in which we live. And the frightening thing is, it's going to get worse and worse. Why? Because no one will do his duty.

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