

Born to Win

Beyond Redemption

by Ronald L. Dart

I've heard it said that the Nazi war criminals, after World War II, were convicted and hanged because of the testimony of Jews against them. And it's sometimes suggested almost as though that somehow meant it wasn't quite right. But it's not true, you know. The testimony of the survivors of the death camps was important, but it was not the most damning testimony at the Nuremberg war trials. The most damning evidence at Nuremberg was *the Nazis' own meticulous record-keeping*.

I didn't know that. It was some time after the event I sat down and I read Robert E. Conot's *Justice at Nuremberg*. There's a citation in it I want to read to you because I think it's important. He said (and I quote):

No one who experienced the trial or has become familiar with the evidence and record can doubt that the case was proved conclusively; that despite all the horrors that were brought to light, it was, if anything, *understated*. None of the defendants attempted to refute the evidence. They sought instead to explain away their own participation and to shift the blame onto others.

Not only were the documents the prosecution introduced the Nazi's own words, but the witnesses—both for the prosecution and for the defense—included some of the highest officials in Hitler's government. Far from denying what had taken place, each contributed additional information to the litany of murder. Dieter Wisleccy, one of Eichmann's half-dozen deputies, provided a detailed accounting of the 5,250,000 Jews who had been exterminated. Otto Olendorf, the chief of Himmler's internal intelligence division and commander of an *einsatzgruppe* in Russia, testified to the slaughter of the Jews in the east. Rudolf Höss, commander of Auschwitz, related the three million people, most of them Jews, had perished in this concentration camp—and he, most assuredly, was an authoritative witness. Erich von dem Bach-Zelewsky, the chief of the anti-partisan forces, confessed to the indiscriminate extermination of the innocent.

It was not as if the evidence was circumstantial or depended upon secondary witnesses. It was direct and damning.

Robert E. Conot - Justice at Nuremberg

I'm not sure what it is about this kind of evil that the men who do it seem to maintain such good records. They *weigh* the violence of their hands.

Having taken a good, hard look at the evidence, I find myself *seething* with anger when people try to deny it ever happened, or when they try to minimize, or say, "Well, no, it was just the testimony of the Jews, and they had an axe to grind." I have *zero* patience with Holocaust deniers. Justice Jackson in his opening address to the tribunal at the Nuremberg trials remarked:

What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust.

Justice Robert H. Jackson - Opening Speech for the Prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials, Nuremberg, Germany, November 21, 1945

What a *fascinating* thing for a judge to say. Could he have been right? What is he driving at? Conot remarked, “These influences, in fact, have regenerated like a poisonous weed.” And, I must add, they always will in *this* world under this system. Failure to recognize this is dangerous beyond belief.

The 12th psalm ends on a strange note, but it’s one that kept rocketing back to my consciousness as I read this book, and again later on when I read a fairly fine read about *Explaining Hitler*. The psalm concludes:

Psalm 12

KJV

⁸ The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

Now, all this came rolling back to mind to me some time ago when I was recording a complete series on the Psalms, called *Reflections on the Psalms* (and we have it available if you want to send in for it). But as I was reading the 58th psalm, a lot of this stuff came rolling back on me. It starts by saying:

Psalm 58

KJ2000

¹ Do you indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do you judge uprightly, O you sons of men?

² Yea, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

There were two things striking about that. One is that they *weigh* the violence of their hands. I think that’s what the Nazis were doing with their record-keeping. They *wanted* a record of it. They were tallying it all up for their own history. The other thing that struck me is they work wickedness *in heart*. But then the psalm goes on to say something that is *terribly* disturbing, in verse three.

Psalm 58

KJV

³ The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

This is one of the most disturbing things I’ve encountered on this subject—and not because it’s counter to experience, precisely *because* it is not. I can’t just say that David was having a bad day when he wrote this psalm. I can’t just say he was using hyperbole. In the first place, I believe this was written under inspiration. But, regardless of David’s mood, it just seems to be true. I can’t explain it, but the die seems to be cast on some children *almost from the start*. It is that “poisonous weed” that Robert Conot described, and the psalm takes a similar tack. In verse four it says:

Psalm 58

KJV

⁴ Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent: *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;

⁵ Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

The frightening thing that comes to me as I read the Psalms (and it's *all through them*) is that the wicked are irredeemable. Once the die is cast they are bound for destruction. I don't like this, but I have to face up to it.

Now, let me stop here, though, and make something clear. When you find the words "the wicked" in the Bible, it's not just talking about garden-variety sinners. We're not talking about weak-willed, heavily-tempted people who fall short—people who would mean well, but don't get there. And it isn't talking about difficult children or rebellious teenagers. In fact, the wicked often seem *quite ordinary* much of the time, even smooth. M. Scott Peck describes them in his book—the remarkable book—*People of the Lie*. They tend to be rather banal—ordinary, plain, boring, day-to-day. And, I guess, somehow the wickedness is hidden in the background. So don't get excited about difficult children, rebellious teenagers. They're not the wicked going astray as soon as they are born. Watch out, though, for the *smooth talker*.

It's not even talking about people who do wrong when they know better. Not this. The wicked are something altogether different. And unless we come to understand this, we're going to find some things in the Bible we will *never get*. They will be incomprehensible to us unless we understand that there is this strain of people out there characterized as the wicked. And the only way you're ever going to really understand them is if you accept at face value what the Bible says about them, about their conduct, about the things that they do, the reasons why they do them, and also what God is going to do to them because of what they have done. Because you can't justify the things that God says he's going to do to these men by saying he's going to do them to people like you and me, who have committed many sins in our lives. It's not going to be a question of God coming down with all this great wrath on a man who stole bread because he was hungry. Continuing in Psalm 58, verse 6:

Psalm 58

KJ2000

⁶ Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

⁷ Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bends his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

⁸ As a snail who melts, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

⁹ Before your pots can feel the burning thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.

¹⁰ The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

¹¹ So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God who judges in the earth.

This is one of those psalms that some people have a hard time reconciling with their image of God and man. We want to believe that all men are redeemable—that there is no such thing as one who is incorrigibly wicked. It's one of the rationales of those who are opposed to the death penalty. The problem is that the Bible is remarkably single-minded when it comes to that category of man called "the wicked". Maybe we should think about that: how the Bible defines them—what it has to say about them.

It may be that the most comprehensive and concise statement about the wicked—what they're like—is found in the 10th psalm, of all places. He begins the psalm by saying:

Psalm 10

KJ2000

¹ Why stand you afar off, O LORD? why hide you yourself in times of trouble?

- ² The wicked in his pride does persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
- ³ For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and blesses the covetous, whom the LORD abhors.
- ⁴ The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in any of his thoughts.
- ⁵ His ways are always prosperous; your judgments are far above, out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he sneers at them.
- ⁶ He has said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.

Now, we've had a *beautiful* example of this stuff in Nazi Germany. And the truth is, if you go back before the war started, people looked at Hitler and thought he was a reasonable man. The prime minister of the United Kingdom flew to Munich to meet the man and sit down with him and signed a document with him and thought, "Well, he's a reasonable guy. We can do business with this man." Isn't that strange, in view of the stuff that was already going on and in the face of the lies that were coming? They just don't *look* like that, usually, to us. And they can actually, like Hitler did, stand in front of a crowd of people and drive them crazy with delight and joy, and tell them, "The master race is going to overcome the world. No one can stand against us." ...And take us into a world war that killed, some people say, over 30 million people. Verse seven:

Psalm 10

KJ2000

- ⁷ His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Under his tongue is mischief and vanity. It's not something you necessarily *see*; it's *behind* the things that he is saying.

Psalm 10

KJ2000

- ⁸ He sits in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places does he murder the innocent [*This is the son of the "murderer from the beginning."* (John 8:44)]: his eyes are secretly set against the poor.

"Privily", now. In public, he will be all for the poor. In public he will go head over heels in telling the poor what wonderful people they are and how he's going to take care of them and look after them. Hitler was going to help the poor. Hitler was going to solve all their economic problems (and, boy, did Germany ever have economic problems). In Germany it was the combination of a collapsing economy and a charismatic leader who could bring people out in the droves and have them screaming and raising their arms and yelling "Heil Hitler" at to top of their voices. That came all together to produce one of the greatest examples of the actions of the wicked in the history of the world.

I won't read every verse in this, just the highlights. You can read it yourself in the 10th psalm. Verse 12:

Psalm 10

AKJV

- ¹² Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand: forget not the humble.
- ¹³ Why does the wicked scorn God? he has said in his heart, You will not require it.
- ¹⁴ You have seen it; for you behold mischief and spite, to requite it with your hand: the poor commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.
- ¹⁵ Break you the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till you find none.

You know, one of the things I like about David (and I had to learn this the hard way) is that he doesn't name these people. He doesn't judge people. He doesn't decide this person is wicked and this person is not. He just categorizes a *kind* of person, who does exist (and they are out there in their numbers) and he asked God to *deal with them*. The way I learned this was: One morning I was praying that God would break the teeth, or put grit in the teeth, or whatever you might do to a man that was causing some problems that I thought he shouldn't do. But then I *tried* to say it and I couldn't. I couldn't get the words out. At the time I didn't understand it. Now I do. David didn't pray that way about a man by name. He prayed about a *category* of men.

Psalm 10

KJ2000

¹⁷ LORD, you have heard the desire of the humble: you will prepare their heart, you will cause your ear to hear:

¹⁸ To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

So now we know. This is what the wicked is, and this is why he deserves *everything he gets*. Jeremiah—in chapter 48, verse ten—said something really fascinating. He said:

Jeremiah 48

ERV

¹⁰ Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD negligently, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

You know what he's talking about here? There was a time when there was a people who were, as a category—the whole nation of them were—wicked to the core. And God sent Saul to completely *obliterate* them from the face of the earth [**1 Samuel 15**]. Why? Why would he do that? It was because they were *irredeemably* wicked. As a result, because Saul *didn't* do it, he fell under this curse. He *did* keep back his sword from blood; he *did not* do what he was supposed to do. There are times when God, who is capable of making this kind of judgement, can conclude that some person or collection of persons is *so evil* that they should be destroyed. God can make that judgement.

The expression “the man of the earth” evokes another passage. It's in 2 Thessalonians, chapter two. Paul writes:

2 Thessalonians 2

AKJV

¹ Now we beseech you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together to him,

² That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁴ Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

“The man of the earth”, he's called back in Psalms; here he is called “the man of sin”. Later he says:

2 Thessalonians 2

AKJV

⁷ For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only he who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way.

⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Oh, now the word “wicked” enters in again. Somebody, toward the time of the end, is going to be *so wicked* that he will be *the one* that the Lord consumes with the spirit of his mouth and destroys with the brightness of His coming.

2 Thessalonians 2

AKJV

⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

¹⁰ And with all delusion of unrighteousness in them that perish; [...]

Why would people believe? Why would people follow this? He answers it right here. He said:

2 Thessalonians 2

AKJV

¹⁰ [...] because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

You know, you see this...it just happens again and again and again in societies around this world (and it's happened in our country more than once, and it may even be happening again)—that people, because they don't have this love of the truth, will sit there and believe some liar who tells them they're going to save him. And he goes on to say:

2 Thessalonians 2

AKJV

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

And the people who are going to fall are the people who refuse to recognize the wicked for what he is. And all I can tell you is: He will not *look* wicked. Not even the devil looks wicked.

Psalms 36

KJ2000

¹ The transgression of the wicked says within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

² For he flatters himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity is found to be hateful.

³ The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he has ceased to be wise, and to do good.

⁴ He devises mischief upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he abhors not evil.

He doesn't despise evil; he's *comfortable* with it. We've shifted to the 36th psalm, because you find this in the Psalms again and again. And when you read this, there is a *finality* about it, as though the wicked are set in their ways and *will not* return. Now, I want to make one thing abundantly clear: It is not that they *cannot*, they *will not*. There is such a thing as fixed wickedness, and there is no remedy for it but destruction.

I realize that doesn't just sound terribly Christian by the way most people interpret Christianity. But, you see, Christianity is the way you and I treat one another in our private lives, the way we live day to

day, the way we do our job at work, the way we treat our neighbors, and so forth. That's what Christianity is dealing with. Meanwhile, there are forces at work in this world who are *so wicked*, so fixed in it, that there is no remedy for it but destruction.

We have actually, as a nation, served as God's instruments in carrying out that destruction more than once. We had to do it in World War II. It was terrible, but it *had* to be done. Why? Because the wicked have no remedy, only destruction. And this is the only way I can understand some of the events of the Old Testament. God told Israel to wipe out entire tribes of people—man, woman, and child. We are not talking about good people who just went bad, we are talking about *settled evil*—the poisonous weed. In Exodus 20, verse 4—in the Ten Commandments—God says:

Exodus 20

AKJV

⁴ You shall not make to you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵ You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me[.]

Now, that is serious business. But it's right there in the Ten Commandments. And you may not like the God that said it, but that's who said it. And he's going to actually sometimes do it. Now, I want to tell you a story about this, though, that you need to understand. It's the story of a man named Ahab, a king.

God sent Elijah the Tishbite—the old, original prophet; the archetype of all prophets. And, at a given point in Ahab's life where, because of what his wife Jezebel had done, a man was killed in order to give him nothing more than a vineyard that was right next to his palace that he wanted to own. That was all. They killed the man to get it. And Elijah came and *really laid it on this man*. And, finally, God sent the prophet to him, to tell him what was going to happen. In verse 25 of 1 Kings 21, here's what it says:

1 Kings 21

AKJV

²⁵ But there was none like to Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

²⁶ And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

He followed the *same thing* that the people did that God had to cast out ahead of Israel.

1 Kings 21

AKJV

²³ And of Jezebel also spoke the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

²⁴ Him that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dies in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

He just laid it on him. "This is coming on you."

1 Kings 21

AKJV

²⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

²⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

²⁹ See you how Ahab humbles himself before me? because he humbles himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil on his house.

Now, this is really interesting, because it sounded for all the world like it was over for Ahab—there was no way, he was irredeemable, he was gone. But he wasn't. He repented. The psalm said “the wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” And it may be possible that a child could be born under a curse from his parents and grandparents. (Don't get too frightened about this; think carefully.) But think about this: Ahab was able to repent, so his sons that followed him could have repented *just like he did*. But they didn't.

There's one more element in all this that has to be considered. M. Scott Peck, in his marvelous book *The People of the Lie*, demonstrated—laid out for us to understand—that there is a very real evil in the world that is *human* evil. But there is also a very present evil in the world that is *not* human. It goes on around us all the time. We don't see it, we're not aware of it, but it is real. Daniel found out about it from the angel that had to fight his way through, in spiritual warfare, in order to get to Daniel with a message [**Daniel 10**]. It's hair-raising to think about, but there is probably spiritual warfare going on right now around about our ears, and we can get on with our lives because we don't know about it.

I want to leave you with this. When you read the Bible and come across the words “the wicked”, realize that you are reading about something *inexpressibly* evil, something that is *irredeemable*, something that can only be dealt with by *complete destruction*. And don't let yourself become timid if you ever find yourself having to deal with it, because if you do, it's likely to roll right over you. And don't ever try to do it on your own authority. You're going to need a lot more behind you than that.

Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart.

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