



With all the wickedness going on in the world,
it's no surprise for us to wonder:
Does God even hear? Does God even care?
If so, how does He want us to respond to evil?
Today we learn to take **The Road Less Traveled**.

The Psalms are so HONEST. Sometimes we might even think, "*I can't believe the writer is questioning God like that!*" Notice that Psalms don't typically end the poem teetering on the ledge of whether God hears & responds to prayer.

Psalm 6:6–10 (NET) ⁶ I am exhausted as I groan; all night long I drench my bed in tears; my tears saturate the cushion beneath me. ⁷ My eyes grow dim from suffering; they grow weak because of all my enemies. ⁸ Turn back from me, all you who behave wickedly, for the LORD [YHWH] **has heard the sound of my weeping!** ⁹ **The LORD has heard my appeal for mercy; the LORD has accepted my prayer.** ¹⁰ May all my enemies be humiliated and absolutely terrified! May they turn back and be suddenly humiliated!

Does God even hear; does God even care? The obvious answer is YES!

Remember what Jesus prayed for the apostles just hours before His crucifixion.

John 17:14–19 (NET) ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ **I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them safe from the evil one.** ¹⁶ They do not belong to the world just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ Just as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And I set myself apart on their behalf, so **that they too may be truly set apart.**

Followers of Jesus are **set apart**, made holy, enabled & expected to live DIFFERENT than the world, to take **THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED**.

BIG TRUTH: Jesus leaves us IN the world to INFLUENCE the world.

Jesus told another parable that gives us more insight into both our present & future.

Matthew 13:24–30 (NET) ²⁴ He presented them with another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a person who sowed **good seed** in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ When the plants sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ So the slaves of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ He said, 'An enemy has done this.' So the slaves replied, 'Do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he said, 'No, since in gathering the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ **Let both grow together until the harvest.** At harvest time I will tell the reapers, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, but then **gather the wheat into my barn.**"'"

ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Romans 12:9 (NET) ⁹ Love must be without hypocrisy. **Abhor** what is evil, **cling** to what is good.

Christians don't PRETEND to love; they PRACTICE love - acting in the best interest of others.

Contrary to our cultural concept of love, this CHRIST-LIKE LOVE will **abhor what is evil** rather than applaud what is evil. This is a super strong word used only here in the New Testament.¹

Christian love is repulsed by EVIL - things that dishonor God & devalue people.

Christians should never applaud impure actions & impure words.

We are to **abhor what is evil** and **cling to what is good**. This word "cling" means to hold on tightly.² We ARE to **cling to what is good**: LIFE, TRUTH, INTEGRITY, JUSTICE, COMPASSION, & FORGIVENESS.

Treating people with VALUE because of Who created them is another GOOD THING. There is NO ROOM for **the EVIL of racism** in the life of a follower of Jesus.

Romans 12:10-13 (NET) ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality.

Can you imagine what God could do through His people who LIVE LIKE THIS!!!

And how do we respond to EVIL? We take **THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED**, understanding that...

Jesus leaves us IN the world to INFLUENCE the world.

Romans 12:14-19 ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse.

Speak the truth, but let your language be seasoned with grace (Colossians 4:6).

Paul mixes how Christians should behave toward believers & non-believers as well.

Romans 12:15-16 ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited.

- We **rejoice** with those having a baby.
- We **weep** with those burying a family member.
- We are **not conceited**, thinking we are better than others (regardless of their social status, intelligence, or color.)

Romans 12:17-19 ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil; consider what is good before all people. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people. ¹⁹ Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God's wrath, for it is written, "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.

- We do our best to get along with others, rather than trying to GET BACK at others. Personal revenge is never okay for the Christian believer. Self-defense? Yes. Further, believers may seek public justice for wrongdoing (see Romans 13). Remember back in Acts when Paul demanded those who beat him - a Roman citizen - apologize?
- * Just because the wicked haven't been judged yet, doesn't mean it won't ever happen, but God reminds us that He will bring justice.

¹ David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of Romans 9-16* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2009), 216.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.

Until then, there is STILL HOPE for the wicked to be forgiven, and YOUR response to EVIL - your obedience to take **THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED** - might be the influence that makes the difference.

Romans 12:20-21²⁰ Rather, *if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head.*²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good.**

And WHO is our ultimate example of this? Of course it's the Lord Jesus!

FEET2FAITH

1. **Bless someone who is different than you.** Buy a meal, hold a door, speak an encouraging word. Ask God to use YOU to make a difference.
2. **Pray for salvation of nation & an enemy.**