

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE:

Power to Deceive.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived”
2nd Timothy 3:13.

The expressions ‘**good**’ and ‘**evil**’ tend in our human thinking to focus on the direct and obvious consequences of actions carried out by people. ‘**Good**’ actions are those that are viewed as bringing blessing, benefit and joy to people whereas ‘**evil**’ actions are viewed as bringing misery, loss and hurt to people. In such human circumstances those terms are I believe perfectly apt.

However, when seen from a divine perspective I believe the words ‘**good**’ and ‘**evil**’ take on somewhat different meanings. In the book of Genesis, we learn that God declared His work of creation to be “**very good**” (**Genesis 1:31**). Why did God view His work of creation as being “**very good**”? Well, I believe the opening words of **Psalms 19** give us the answer – “**The heavens declare the glory of God**”. From God’s perspective, a “**good**” work is one that brings glory to Him.

This understanding explains precisely what the Lord Jesus meant when He said in **Matthew 5:16** “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your GOOD works and GLORIFY your Father, who is in heaven**”.

Logically I think it follows then that ‘**evil**’ refers to that which does not bring glory to God but instead dishonours Him and gives no credit to Him. It refers to the actions of natural, unregenerate and unredeemed people who do not know God as their “**Father**”. In and of themselves from a human perspective their actions may appear to be ‘**good**’ but the reality from God’s perspective is very different.

Again, I think these words of the Lord Jesus recorded in **Matthew 12:34** are helpful to our understanding “**How can you being EVIL speak GOOD things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A GOOD man out of the GOOD treasure of the heart bringeth forth GOOD things, and an EVIL man out of the EVIL treasure bringeth forth EVIL things**”.

The “**evil treasure**” is of course the output of a natural, unregenerate and unredeemed “**heart**” that is summed up in these words found in **Jeremiah 17:9** “**The heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked**”. Referring to “**wicked**” Vines Expository Dictionary says this – ‘**The characteristics of a wicked person qualify him as ... GODLESS**’ – such a person is ‘natural, unregenerate and unredeemed’.

The result of all this is that there are people who are often viewed, in human opinion, as being “**good**”, who are not viewed in the same light by God. Often such people appear in professing Christian circles and are held up as great examples of what it means to be a Christian. However, when their beliefs teachings and practices are examined and critiqued in the light of God’s truth, the Bible, the reality is that they are clearly ‘natural, unregenerate and unredeemed’ and so they are in fact from the divine perspective, “**evil**”.

Keeping these thoughts in mind I want simply to share now my Facebook post of Monday 28th November 2016 that related to **NORMAN VINCENT PEALE** and I hope in consequence you will come to understand why I quoted the words of **2nd Timothy 3:13** at the start of this article. This was my Facebook post –

ALF McCREARY devoted his page in the **Belfast Telegraph** on **Saturday (26 November 2016)** to singing the praises of the late **NORMAN VINCENT PEALE**. We learn that Mr McCreary met Mr Peale some years ago, in person, in New York. Mr Peale is probably best known for his book ‘**The Power of Positive Thinking**’. Mr McCreary finished his written ‘eulogy’ with these words ‘his books are still worth reading, and to me he remains a treasured advocate for the power of Christian faith at its very best’.

Mr Peale was many things including ‘a New Ager, a Shriner, a 33-degree Mason and a Knight Templar’ (“Billy Graham and his friends” by Cathy Burns p 26) but he was certainly no reliable and authentic voice for the ‘power of Christian faith’ as Mr McCreary phrased it for Peale wrote “Who is God?... God is vitality. God is life. God is energy. As you breathe God in, as you visualise His energy, you will be re-energised. You will live longer, you will live better, you will have greater health, you will have dynamic energy” (“Billy Graham and his friends” by Cathy Burns p 29).

On the same page and the page following that this quote was taken from we also read – Since Peale’s ‘God’ is energy it’s no wonder that he “denied the virgin birth, deity, resurrection and vicarious satisfaction of Jesus Christ. He did not believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven” – these views held by Mr Peale do not in any way reflect or express the genuine ‘power of Christian faith’.

Helpful articles assessing Mr Peale can be found on

<http://www.letusreason.org/Poptea2.htm>

<http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=4211>

<http://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-norman-vincent-peale>

