

The Song of the Clay

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In 1967 the American band *The American Breed* released their version of *Bend Me, Shape Me*.

The single reached the #5 position in the top 100 in the U.S.A. in 1968.

The first lines of the chorus were for me the reason to write the article below.

“It Is WELL ...”

You probably sing once in a while: “It is well, it is well with my soul!” Of course it is well with your soul: your heavenly Father won’t send you the wrong things!!

But what if things happen that we do *not* like, or experience as *unpleasant*? Think of when someone we love dies young, contracts an illness without the prospect of a cure, has a loss of income, or experiences an accident? You can probably fill in many more examples. What happens then with “It is well, it is well ...”? Can we still sing it then?

The song “It is well, it is well with my soul” did not exist when Job walked on the Earth, but Job could very well have written it! To him befell, completely without his fault, the most horrible things. He lost his great wealth, his children and finally his health; he got terrible boils all over his body! One thing wasn’t over before the next happened. He went from being super rich to being a beggar.

How did Job react? Did Job become a rebel? Did he start to rage and swear, and moan? No!

Job knew something very important and he told it to his wife, who was completely fed up with the situation:

*“Indeed should we receive good from the One, Elohim, and should we not receive evil?”
In all this, Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10; Concordant Literal Translation).*

Job knew something that many today do not know or want to recognize: ALL things are out of God; not only the good, but also that which we experience as evil. God is the creator of

evil (Isaiah 45:7), and He uses it as a tool to paint a dark background against which, later, His glory and goodness will contrast in a magnificent way. This way He teaches us the reason for our loyalty and gratitude towards Him. Without evil this would not be possible.

Evil in itself is neutral; it is the goal for which it is applied that determines what it will be. A box on the ear will be experienced as evil by the receiver, but it can, in the end, be very beneficial! The greatest evil EVER, *the murder of Jesus Christ*, had very beneficial results! Just wait until you see the end result!

Does God Himself hand out evil to us? No – for that, He has His instruments. In Egypt, for example, it was the “*angel of death*” and for the bulk of the work He created Satan for the task; yet Satan cannot do everything he wants. In Job 1 and 2 we see that Satan suggests action against Job, but he cannot do anything or more without God’s approval. He cannot go outside the ground that God has given him. That is why, in the end, all is out of God.

Should we then applaud evil? No. Should we apply evil? Be very careful with that, because we have such a limited insight, and we are often so selfish. We could do more harm than good. Should we thank God for the evil that hits us? No. *We should thank God for the OUTCOME of evil!* Since *all* is out of Him, it will have a good result in the end!

INDEPENDENT?

Many people think the world of themselves. They think that things and people – yes, even God! – can be manipulated, and it indeed seems that way! Yet, in God’s eyes we are just tiny toddlers who may be able to crawl and walk, but who lack the insight to really take the right decisions. Put on top of that the fact that we are mortals (because of which we sin, Romans 5:12), and the picture is complete. Still, “WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS!!!”

I

I.

I, Lord.

Lord, I.

Lord!

In these little words the whole spectrum of mankind lies hidden.

I. Here man is on the throne. He thinks he must have everything in his life under control, and that he has it so. O.K., sometimes things are hard, but ...

I, Lord. Here man is religious, and finds it comfortable to have a Lord standing by Who can help him in difficult times. However, man is on the journey of life and keeps the reins firmly in his hands. The Lord is advisor.

Lord, I. Here is the average believer. He recognizes that the Lord is there and he does want to give Him the honor for all kinds of things; *BUT*, the Lord is expected to listen to the advice that *I* gives Him. If He does not listen, *I* starts arranging things himself; *I* takes the power back in his own hands. The Lord may be on the journey with him, but man rules and takes the reins if things are not to his liking.

Lord! Here, man has totally surrendered to God and to Christ. He lives his life with the daily problems and reacts to that which crosses his path, but he recognizes that God is in control and rules, and that both good and evil come from Him. Man does not panic and does not start manipulating when things seem to go “wrong.”

“BEND ME, SHAPE ME.”

The chorus of the song by *The American Breed* is as follows:

Bend me, shape me,
 Anyway you want me
Long as you love me
 It's all right.

The man who says “Lord!” recognizes that in the end all is out of God, that therefore it *cannot* be wrong, and then there *must* be a positive reason behind *everything* that happens. He does not complain when life is hard, because life is not hard – it is just not the way *he* wants it to be. He lives within the given realm. Of course, he goes to a doctor when he is ill, but he does not seek a cure from things that are not meant for this dispensation (like miracle workers and the like). The man who says “Lord!” works for his bread, but he does not live to work; he lives to serve his God. He does not strive after the things after which the world is chasing, because he knows that his future lies in the heavenly realms, where he will not be working with perishable things but with spiritual things, things that last. That is why our apostle Paul says:

*Now devoutness with contentment is great capital; for nothing do we carry into the world, and it is evident that neither can we carry anything out. Now, **having sustenance and shelter, with these we shall be sufficed.** Now, those intending to be rich are falling into a trial and a trap and the many foolish and harmful desires which are swamping men into extermination and destruction. For a root of all of the evils is the fondness for money, which some, craving, were led astray from the faith and try themselves on all sides with much pain. **Now you, O man of God, flee from these things: yet pursue righteousness, devoutness, faith, love, with endurance, suffering, and meekness** (I Timothy 6:6-11; Concordant Literal Translation)*

Paul knew how things were. He had seen Christ in His glory and Paul knew that he himself, once, will be allowed to possess that glory; and once we will see that you and I, too, one day will get such glory, we will change and not be troubled so much by earthly things. Paul had seen Christ and what the result of the great evil was that happened to Christ: endless glory! Paul knew that both good and evil, ultimately, come from God. Paul went straight through good and evil. Unjustly imprisoned, shipwrecked, stoned, hungry, rejection, etc, and what was his conclusion?

Being reviled, **we are blessing**; being persecuted, **we are bearing with it** (I Corinthians 4:12; Concordant Literal Translation).

Did Paul, while in prison, escape when an earthquake broke his shackles and opened the doors? No! Paul knew that the road he was travelling was programmed for him by God (Acts 9:16), and when, humanly speaking, things did not go so well, Paul did not start moaning and he did not take the reins out of the hands of his Lord! No, *Paul started praising God!* (Acts 16:25). He did not run away from it, but walked the road ahead of him, even though that road was often far from easy. Paul did not break out to “work on his career” and collect goods. Paul knew God and that his heavenly Father would take care of him. Paul also knew that in a good education, evil is not kept outside – that would only create weaklings – but used, in a measure, to improve the child, fit for what is to come.

There is a lot of anxiety among people – even among Christians – much resistance, much rebellion, often originating from fear: “How will it go?” Wouldn’t it be much better, when necessary, to suffer injustice and keep the peace? Why do we cling so much to earthly things? Why don’t we instead aim for our future and for the spiritual blessings that we now already may receive, blessings that are *unspeakably* more beautiful and precious than the most valuable things that we can own here on Earth? Doesn’t the rebellion and the labor against what God has put on our path take a lot (if not all!) of our happiness away that we get thrown in our lap, for free, without any merit from our side? Even though we can be very rich with our earthly things, we can be as poor as a church mouse. Conversely we, in a different way, could be *extremely* wealthy, as long as we would look at our *spiritual* wealth!

I do hope that you, with me, can sing, “Bend me, shape me, anyway You want me! Long as You love me, it’s alright!” The scary question, “How will it go?” is answered in, “It is well, it is well with my soul!” Do you know what the last line of “Bend me, shape me” is? “You’ve got the power to turn on the light!”

We have nothing to fear than fear alone! We have a good Father, Who gives us what we need; good and evil. The result was seen by Paul: *unbelievable glory!*

That is why we sing the song of the clay, that asks the Great Potter, “Bend me, shape me, anyway You want me! Long as You love me, it’s all right!” God *never* leaves you (even though it may *seem* that way), and *always* loves you. He is there, *ALWAYS!*

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