

“Word” That Overcomes War

By Daniel Shayesteh



Wouldn't it be comforting if a word or several words had the power to stop wars and protect or rescue people from the losses and bloodshed of war and from the wounds that war leaves behind for decades and centuries?

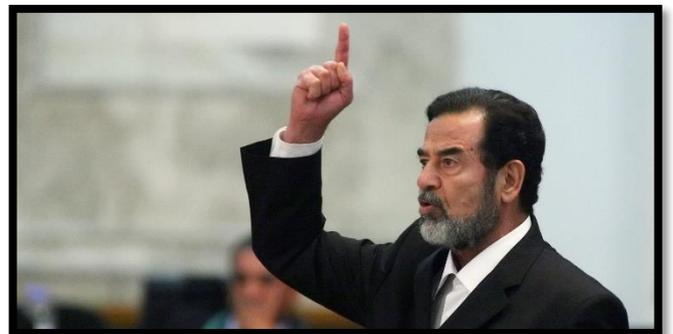
I remember the cry of a man over the dead body of his younger brother who was shot dead by a religious guard in Tehran, Iran, because of his opposition to Ayatollah Khomeini. The older brother was crying loudly, humbly looking around and to heaven, expressing his heart-melting words and saying: ***“Isn't there anything, anyone to extinguish the fire of hostility?”*** Almost all the people who were watching him and his powerless family were touched and tears poured from their eyes.

History is full of cries like this. Our contemporary world is also full of this cry because of terrorism and religious, ideological and sectarian wars. These cries have become so heart-melting since many of the great leaders of our time, who call themselves civilised, also fuel the hostility with their political correctness and thereby add more to the pains of people.

Is there anyone, any word or anything that can change the moral standard of this world and teach peace, real peace, to people, to tyrants, to victims and to those who watch with hardened hearts?

It is amazing that everybody cries for help when crime raises its head. Even the cruellest person cries for forgiveness and reconciliation when he is confronted with hostility and war. There are people in our world who embrace war and bloodshed; there are also people who hate war. Yet history has demonstrated that people from both groups eventually yearn for something to put an end to bloodshed and war.

Saddam Hussein was one of those who had a passion for war. He never extended compassion to people – not to his Sunni Arab compatriots nor to his Shia Arabs opponents nor Kurds nor Turks – no matter their sects. He even manifested his smiles through the channel of his cruel dictatorship to the extent that even his smiles evoked fear. He was hoping to bring back the dictatorship of ancient Babylon so that all surrounding nations would prostrate themselves to him. Even he, who did not know what mercy was, pleaded for mercy after his rule collapsed. I watched his defences in the Iraqi court as much as I could. I saw him who was very quick to kill his opponents in very vicious ways beseeching compassion. His last minute of crying to the new Iraqi government guards is unforgettable. He was trying to touch the hearts of the guards, who did not have any legal power to release him, begging them that an Arab should not kill another Arab. He was endeavouring to convince them that they were Arabs, he himself was an Arab and they therefore needed to give up killing him. A man who always boasted in his power and arms; never allowed his conscience to be vocal about the rights and lives of others, was himself now begging and hoping that his humble words might persuade the consciences of his adversaries to let him go. Wow!



History is full of such experiences. They teach us that hatred, discrimination and hostility in our lives may devour our enemies at first but then they devour us and our own families too. History also teaches us the effects of

kindness, tolerance and self-sacrifice. It reveals to us that nothing is better than loving and respectful words which are able to diminish the impact of intolerance, wars and hostilities. Friendly words are powerful. They soften the toughness in relationships and create long-lasting friendship. That's why Jesus is called the Word, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of words so that anyone who comes to Him will not perish but be saved. He is the Word who became flesh to manifest the God of love in order to demolish the walls of hostility among people and unite them together.

Jesus reveals the difference between peace-loving words and the words that accompany hatred, war and weapons. Peace-loving words penetrate hearts and cause people to find better alternatives for their relationships. Words of hate, war and weapons close the door on good motives and feelings. Such words shatter hearts; first the hearts of victims but later the hearts of the tyrants themselves who boasted in their power and superiority.



Words cannot describe the noble role of Jesus Christ in relationships. He opens the eyes of even tyrants to see that the immorality of disrespect and hostility in them will destroy them too and that they need to allow Him to renew their minds and hearts in order to become peaceful. See how one of those ex-tyrants speaks about Jesus Christ: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

The Apostle Paul, once a tyrant, who was thirsting for the blood of Christians, was touched by Jesus and gave over all his rights to Jesus in order to be able to value the lives of others, including the lives of his enemies. He says: *For we do not wrestle against*

flesh and blood ... (Ephesians 6:12)

He was once a hostile man but now confesses that hostility and war against mankind is a service to Satan, the spirit of wickedness, who never values freedom of choice or a peaceful life. Paul goes further by saying: *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ ... Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ... (Philippians 3:7-8)*

After encountering Jesus, Paul realized that understanding the heart of Jesus was more excellent than every worldly and religious privilege he had. For him Jesus is the Word of heaven which reveals the mind of God, penetrates the depths of hearts and minds and lays them open to catch the true purpose of life.

Jesus is the Word of love that has the absolute power to overcome wars against humanity and re-establish peace. Jesus was promised from the beginning of creation to bring about peace between God and people and among nations. It is because of His reconciling power that Jesus says in the Gospel that He has overcome the world; the world that ignores the cries of people and is quick to exercise discrimination, cause war and hostility. His Gospel says: *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled. (Hebrews 12:14-15)*

Dr Shayesteh was born into a Muslim family in Northern Iran. He became a radical Muslim leader and teacher of Islam in the militant Free Islamic Revolutionary Movement, closely supporting Ayatollah Khomeini. However, after falling out of favour with Khomeini's political group, he escaped to Turkey and there began an amazing journey to faith in Jesus Christ.

Daniel's mission is to help others understand and lovingly respond to those who do not know Christ. He is also deeply concerned for the future of Western societies, their loss of confidence in Judeo-Christian values, and their persistent naïvete about the implications of the world-wide Islamic revival.

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