

Forgiveness

Talk by Grant Odhner
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The Old Testament God

I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me**, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Exodus 20:5-6

(Sistine Chapel)



The Old Testament God

The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He **by no means clears the guilty**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.

Numbers 14:18

(Sistine Chapel)



The Old Testament God

Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, ... For **the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.**

Deuteronomy 4:23-24

(Sistine Chapel)



The Old Testament God

Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; **He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.**

Joshua 24:19

(Sistine Chapel)



The New Testament God

Woe to you,
Scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites!

Matthew 23:23



The New Testament God

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will **cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:41-42



The New Testament God

And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, **after He has killed, has power to cast into hell**; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

Luke 12:4-5



The Old & New Testament Scriptures do counsel us to pray for God's forgiveness

1 Kings 8:38-40

[Lord,] ...whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, ... when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple [in Jerusalem]: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and **forgive**, and do, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.

The Old & New Testament Scriptures do counsel us to pray for God's forgiveness

Psalm 86:5-6

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to **forgive**,
And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.
Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.

The Old & New Testament Scriptures do counsel us to pray for God's forgiveness

Mark 11:25-26

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, **that your Father in heaven may also forgive** you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, **neither will your Father in heaven forgive** your trespasses."

Matthew 6:12

And **forgive us our debts...**

Burden of sin!



How to be freed?



God's forgiveness?

(the idea in Christian churches)

New Church Idea of Forgiveness
And How We Find It

The God of the Heavenly Doctrine

The Lord forgives the sins of everyone, and does not impute a single one to any person, for He says: “They know not what they do.”

(TCR 539)



The God of the Heavenly Doctrine

[H]ow deluded those are who think, and still more those who believe, and still more those who teach, that God can damn anyone, curse anyone, send anyone to hell, predestine any soul to eternal death, avenge wrongs, be angry, or punish. **He cannot even turn Himself away from a person, nor look upon them with a stern countenance.*** These and like things are contrary to His essence; and what is contrary to His essence is contrary to His very Self.
(TCR 56)

* *dura fronte*



“Forgive” (the word)

- “forgive” = lit. “to give off,” “give away”
- i.e. to give up or to cease to *hold on to* resentment or anger, to cease to *impose* punishment

Old Testament words for “forgive”:

- nasa (נָסָא) - “to lift up/away”
- salach (סָלַח) - “to send away, let go”
- kaphar (כָּפַר) - “to cover” (hide, put away)

“Forgive” (the word)

- “forgive” = lit. “to give off,” “give away”
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New Testament words for “forgive”:

- *aphiemi* (αφιημι) - “to send off/away,” “to let off/away”
- *apoluo* (απολυω) - “loose away” (Lk 6.37; Mk 3.29; see Acts)
- *charizomai* (χαριζομαι) - “to be gracious to” (Lk 7.42, 43)

“Forgive” (the word)

- “forgive” = lit. “to give off,” “give away”
- i.e. to give up or to cease to *hold on to* resentment or anger, to cease to *impose* punishment

The Writings main word for “forgive”:

- *remittere* - “to send back”
- also translated: “to let go,” “let back,” “relax,” “slacken”

What is forgiveness?

- Forgiveness of sins is the **separation** of evil from good, and the **rejection** of evil **to the sides**.

(AC 9013:8; DP 279:2; cf. AC 5398)

- Forgiveness is a **withholding** from evil and falsity and a **holding in** good and truth.

(AC 8393, 9014:3, 9333:2, 9447f, 9937:4; DP 279f; TCR 611, 614; cf. AC 5893)

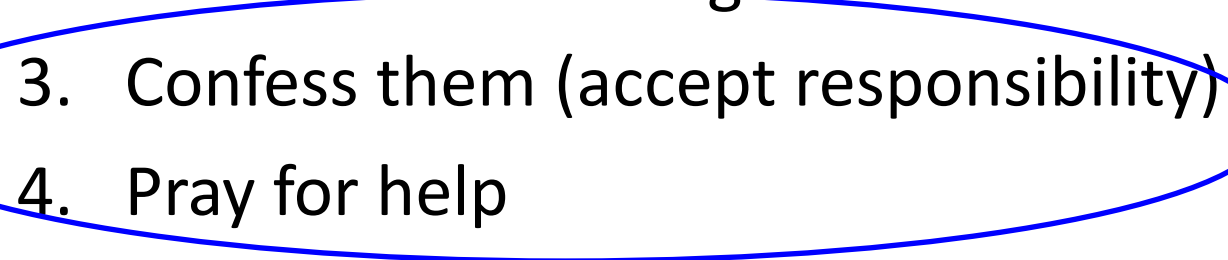
- Forgiveness of sins is the ability to be **held** by the Lord in the good of love and the truths of faith, and to be **withheld** from evils and falsities.

(AC 9448, 8448 = HD 166)

How are we held back from evil?
...saved?

What is the New Church teaching?

Repentance

1. Examine self
 2. See and acknowledge evils
 3. Confess them (accept responsibility)
 4. Pray for help
 5. Desist and begin a new life
- 

Forgiveness through Repentance

TCR 538-539.

538. *Confession ought to be made before the Lord God the Saviour, and then prayer should be made for help and power to resist evils. (heading) ...*

539. There are two duties incumbent on a person after examination, namely,
① **prayer** ② **confession**.

① The **prayer** will be that the Lord may be merciful, and that He may give power to resist the evils of which they have repented, and supply the inclination and desire to do good, since without the Lord “a person can do nothing” (John 15.5).

Forgiveness through Repentance

TCR 538-539. (continued)

- ② The **confession** [on the part of the repentant person] will be that they see, recognize and acknowledge their evils, and perceive that they are a miserable sinner.

There is no need to **enumerate one's sins before the Lord**, or to **pray for their forgiveness**. Their enumeration is unnecessary, because the repentant person has already searched them out, and seen them in their self, and consequently the sins are present before the Lord, as they are present to their self. Moreover, the Lord led them to search out the sins, disclosed them, and inspired grief for them, and together with this an effort to refrain from them and begin a new life.

Forgiveness through Repentance

TCR 538-539. (continued)

There are **two reasons** why **prayer for forgiveness of sins** need not be made before the Lord.

The first is that **sins are not abolished, but removed**. And they are removed as a person afterwards desists from them and enters into the new life. ...

The second reason is that, because He is mercy itself, **the Lord forgives the sins of all, and does not impute a single one to any person**, for He says: "They know not what they do." Yet they are not on that account abolished. When Peter asked how often he should forgive his brother his trespasses, whether he should forgive him till seven times, the Lord replied: "I do not say to you, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18.21, 22). What, then, will the Lord not do?

Prayer A: that the Lord may be merciful

TCR 539.

A

The **prayer** will be **that the Lord may be merciful**, and that He may give power to resist the evils of which they have repented, and supply the inclination and desire to do good, since without the Lord “a person can do nothing” (John 15.5).

What?!

*If we know that the Lord is always merciful,
and that He holds no evil against us,
and it is unnecessary to pray for forgiveness,
why are we told to pray that the Lord may be merciful?*

Prayer A: that the Lord may be merciful

And why are we sometimes told to pray for forgiveness?!

AC 8389 (= HD 161)

To do the work of repentance, is to desist from sins after he has thus confessed them, and **from a humble heart has prayed for forgiveness**, and to live a new life according to the precepts of charity and faith.

My answer: *Though we do not need to pray for forgiveness on the Lord's account, it can be useful to us, because (like all prayer to the Lord) it helps us enter a state of **humbleness**—which alone makes us receptive to the Lord's help.*

Prayer B: for the Lord's help and power

TCR 539.

B

The **prayer** should be that the Lord may be merciful, **that He may give power to resist the evils** that have been repented of, and that He will provide inclination and affection for doing good. (TCR 538-539)

*Again, prayer **with humility** is what opens our mind to the Lord, and draws our minds together, opening the channel of His power, which alone holds us in good and withholds us from evil!*

The Writings emphasize that we must pray to the Lord for help and power:

In order to refrain from sins and shun and turn away from them, [a person] **must pray to the Lord for help**. (AE 803.2)

Prayer B: for the Lord's help and power

When they see it and know what sin is, [a person] is able, **if they implore the Lord's help**, to cease willing it, to shun it, and afterwards to act against it. (DP 278; also 281.3)

The Divine providence works in every person in a thousand ways... and its unceasing end is to purify them.... Nothing is incumbent on the person except to remove evils in the external self. All the rest the Lord provides, **if He is appealed to**. (DP 296e)

Every person is so constituted as to be able, by the Lord's power, **if they beg for it**, to shun evils as sins as though from their self. (Life 31e)

A person must act as though of their self but from the Lord's power, **which they must petition for**. (Life 104e)

More: Life 58; AE 837.5, 936.2, 938.2, 1164; Char 203; TCR 530.

Prayer C: inclination and affection to do good

TCR 539.

©

The **supplication** should be that the Lord may be merciful, that He may give power to resist the evils that have been repented of, and that He will provide **inclination and affection for doing good.**

*Even though shunning evil must be our first priority in seeking a heavenly life, it is in reality **our reception of good loves** from the Lord that moves evil loves to the side.*

*So even as we pray for power to resist the selfish loves that plague us, at the same time we rightly long to have a stronger **love of what is good and true.***

*We pray to the Lord to **hold us** in such a **love** and withhold us from our selfish proprium and its evil.*

Forgiveness does not abolish sins!

Forgiveness is removal of evils

AC 9014.3

The Lord forgives everyone their sins, because He is mercy itself.

Nevertheless they are not by that forgiven unless the person performs serious repentance, and desists from evils, and afterward lives a life of faith and charity, and this even to the end of their life. When this is done, the person receives from the Lord spiritual life, which is called new life.

When from this new life the person views the evils of their former life, and turns away from them, and regards them with horror, then for the first time are the evils forgiven, for then the person is held in truths and goods by the Lord, and is withheld from evils. From this it is plain what is the forgiveness of sins, and that it cannot be granted within an hour, nor within a year.

What is removal?

“Remove” = *removeo* (Lat) – to move from its place, move back (*re-*)

Not eradication, rather:

- a **moving to the side**
- a **re-purposing of them**

DP 79

What a human being does from freedom according to his thought is also said to remain with him, since **nothing that a person has appropriated to himself can be eradicated**. For it has come to be of his love and at the same time of his reason, that is, of his will and at the same time of his understanding, and consequently of his life. **This can indeed be re-moved, but still it cannot be expelled**. And when it is re-moved it is transferred as it were from the center to the circumference, and there it stays. This is what is meant by its remaining.

Why not an eradication?

The Lord would never take away what we have experienced and lived: it is part of our life!

DP 79

What a human being does from freedom according to their thought is also said to remain with them, since **nothing that a person has appropriated to their self can be eradicated**. For it has come to be of their love and at the same time of their reason, that is, of their will and at the same time of their understanding, and consequently of **their life**. (→)

Re-moval – *a moving to the side*

DP 79 (continued)

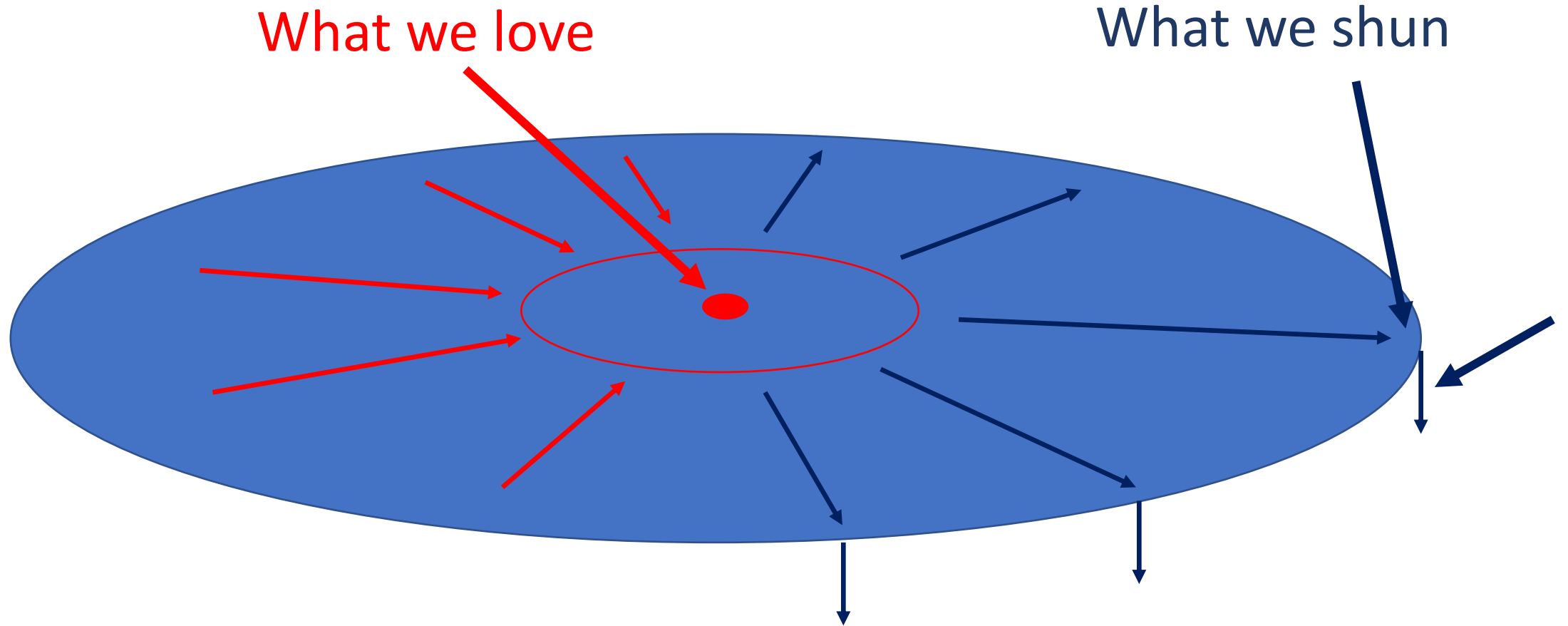
[What we have done from freedom according to our thought] can indeed be re-moved, but still it cannot be expelled. And when it is re-moved it is transferred as it were from the center to the circumference, and there it stays. This is what is meant by its remaining. (→)

Re-moval – *a moving to the side*

DP 79 (continued)

[2] For instance, if a person in their childhood and youth has appropriated to their self a certain evil by doing it from the delight of their love, such as fraud, blasphemy, revenge or adultery; and if they have committed those evils from freedom according to thought, they have indeed appropriated them to their self. But if they afterwards repent, shun them and regard them as sins that are to be abhorred, and so from freedom according to reason desists from them, then there are appropriated to them the good principles to which those evils are opposed. These **good principles then constitute the center**, and they **re-move the evils towards the circumference further and further as they turn away from and abhor those evils**. This results from the person being withheld from evil and being **held in good by the Lord**. All a human being's hereditary evil as well as their actual evil may be treated in this way.

Re-moval – *a moving to the side*



Opposite things are separated from the rest, and as it were “**hang down**, and present themselves underneath, and balance those above” (AC 5278).

Re-moval – a *re-purposing* in our “Book of Life”

Our evils are re-purposed as relatively ‘lifeless’ parts of our spiritual body... They serve a low-level use.

Our ruling love organizes our spiritual mind and body

“All the interiors with a human being, which are of their understanding and will, are **disposed in a form** according to their ruling love (refs.)” (HD 62)

“[The ruling love in a person] inflows into the particulars [of their mind] and **arranges them**, and everywhere **induces a likeness** of itself.” (HH 58)



This 'organization' includes our sins!

“[A]fter death a person **loses nothing whatever** of what has been in their memories, whether in the exterior or in the interior memory. Insomuch that nothing can possibly be thought of so small or so minute that the person does not have it with him.” (AC 2475)

This 'organization' includes our sins!

“The interior memory is such therefore that it has written into it **every detail**, indeed every smallest detail, which the person has ever thought, said, or done, including those things which appeared to him in shadow, even the tiniest.”

(AC 2474) [also DP 277; AC 9386]

Our spiritual body is connected with our interior memory

The things of the interior memory manifest themselves in the other life by a certain sphere, from which the quality of spirits is known at a distance, that is, what is their affection, and what their opinions. This sphere comes forth from the activity of the things in the interior memory. (AC 2489)

[Angels told Sw that there is a] sphere of affections and of thoughts from them which encompasses each angel, by which their presence is made evident to others near and far. ... [T]hat encompassing sphere ... is from each and everything of their body, from which substances are constantly flowing out like a stream, and what flows out surrounds them. (DLW 291)

*Because our spiritual body
takes form according to our
interior memory...*

“In disclosing their acts to a person
after death, the angels to whom
the office of searching is given then
look into their **face**, and their
search extends through the **whole
body...**”



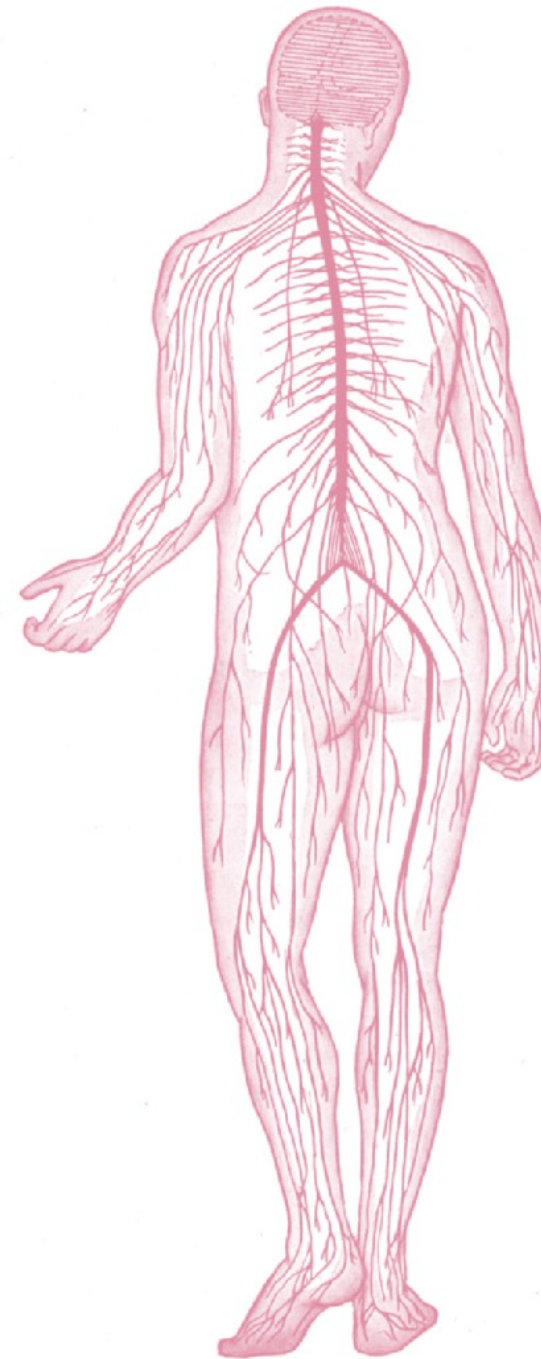
“... beginning with the **fingers of one hand and the other...**”



“... and thus proceeding through
the whole.”



“As I wondered at this the reason was given, namely, that as the single things of the thought and will have been **inscribed on the brain**, for their beginnings are there, so have they likewise been **inscribed on the whole body**, since all things of the thought and the will extend from their beginnings and terminate there as in their ultimates.”



“And this is why the things that are **inscribed on the memory** from the will and consequent thought are inscribed not only on the brain, but also upon the whole person, and there, come into existence in order **in accordance with the order of the parts of the body.**”

(HH 463)



Re-moval – *a gradual process!*

AC 9014.3

From this it is plain what is the forgiveness of sins, and that it **cannot be granted within an hour, nor within a year.**

TCR 539.

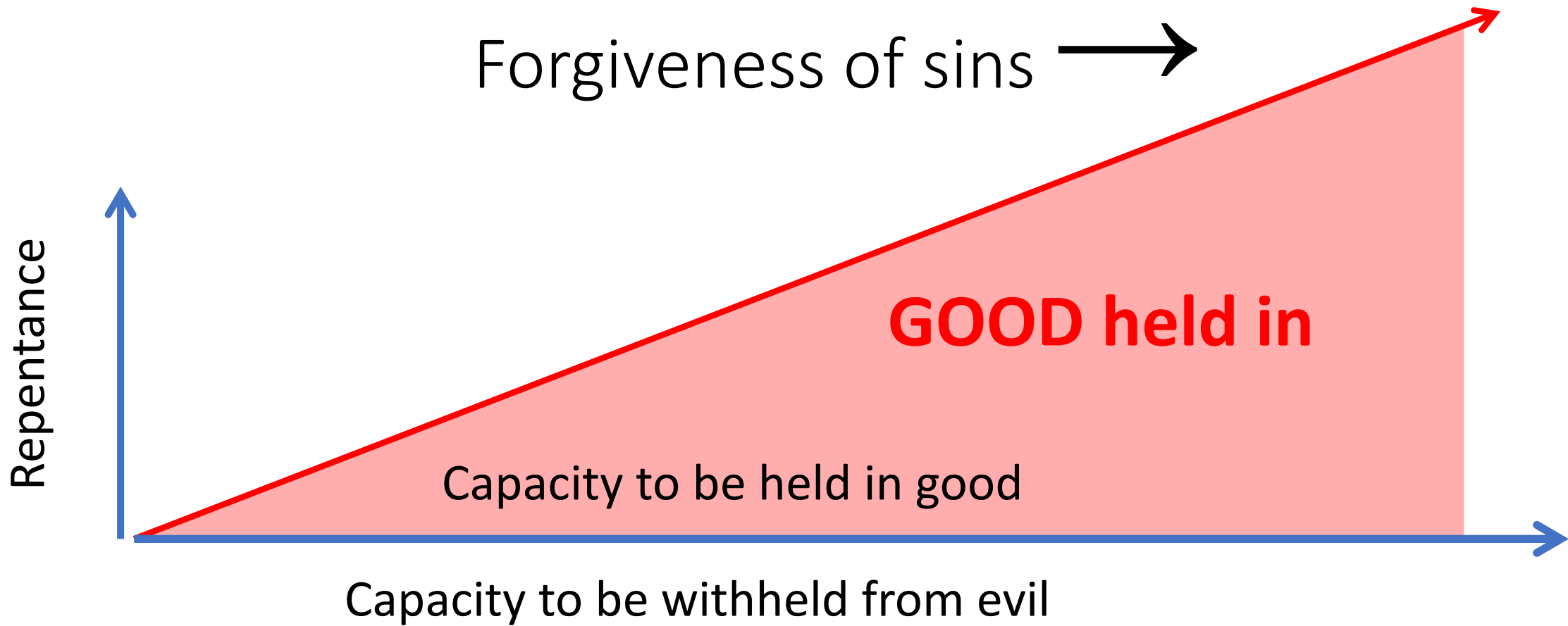
[S]ins are not abolished, but removed. And they are removed as a person afterwards desists from them and enters into the new life. For there are innumerable lusts involved in every evil as in a cluster, which **cannot be removed in a moment but only by degrees**, as a person allows their self to be reformed and regenerated.

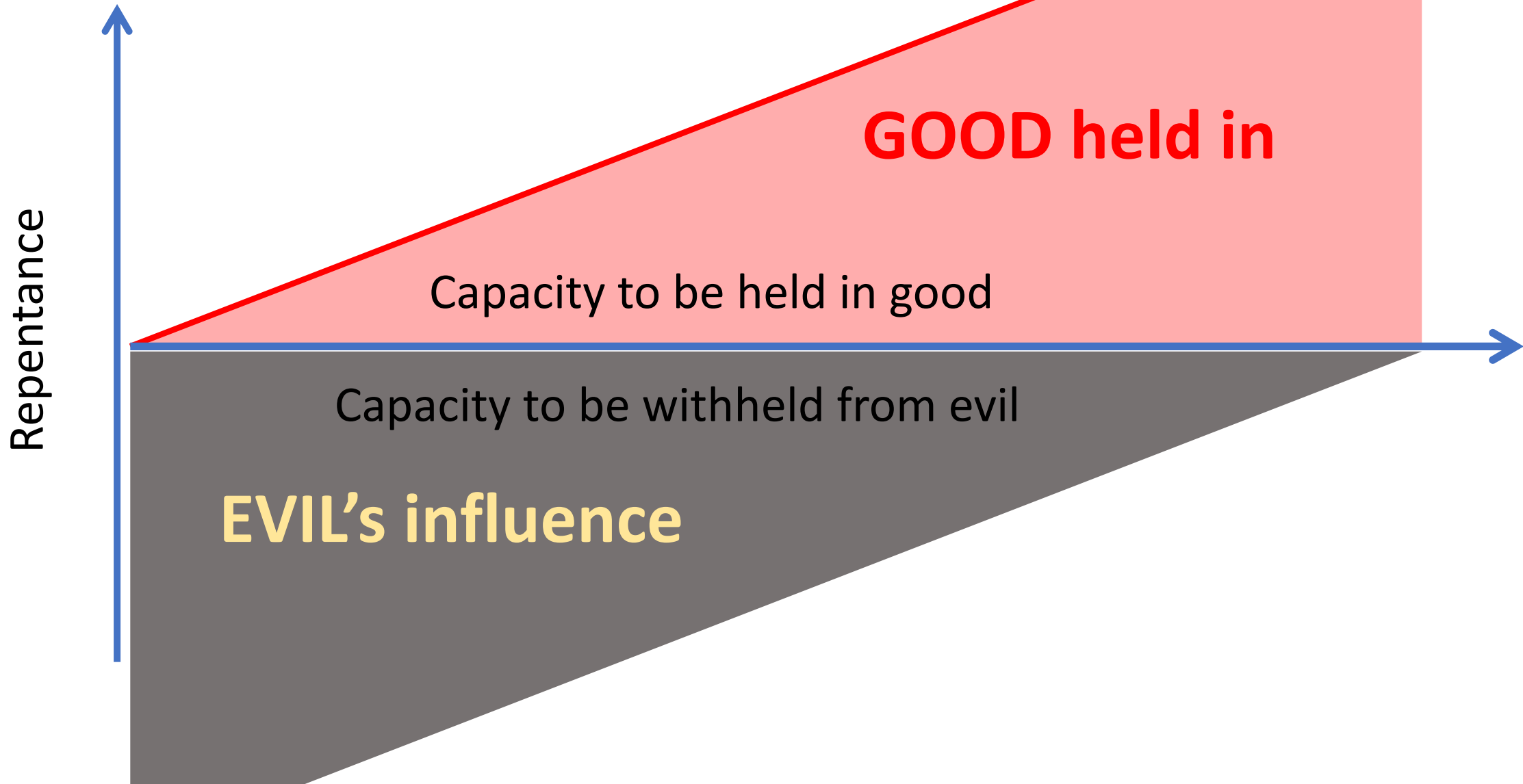
Re-moval – *a gradual process!*

Sins are continually being forgiven a person by the Lord, for He is mercy itself; but sins cling to the person, however much they may suppose that they have been forgiven, nor are they removed from them except through [repentance of life, that is, through] a life according to the commands of faith. **So far** as they live according to these commands, **so far** sins are removed; and **so far** as they are removed, **so far** they have been forgiven. For a person is withheld from evil by the Lord and is held in good. And [the person] is able to be withheld from evil so far... as they have done what is good from affection.

This shows what forgiveness of sins is, and how it comes about. One who believes that sins are forgiven in any other way is much mistaken.

(AC 8393)





Repentance

Forgiveness of sins →

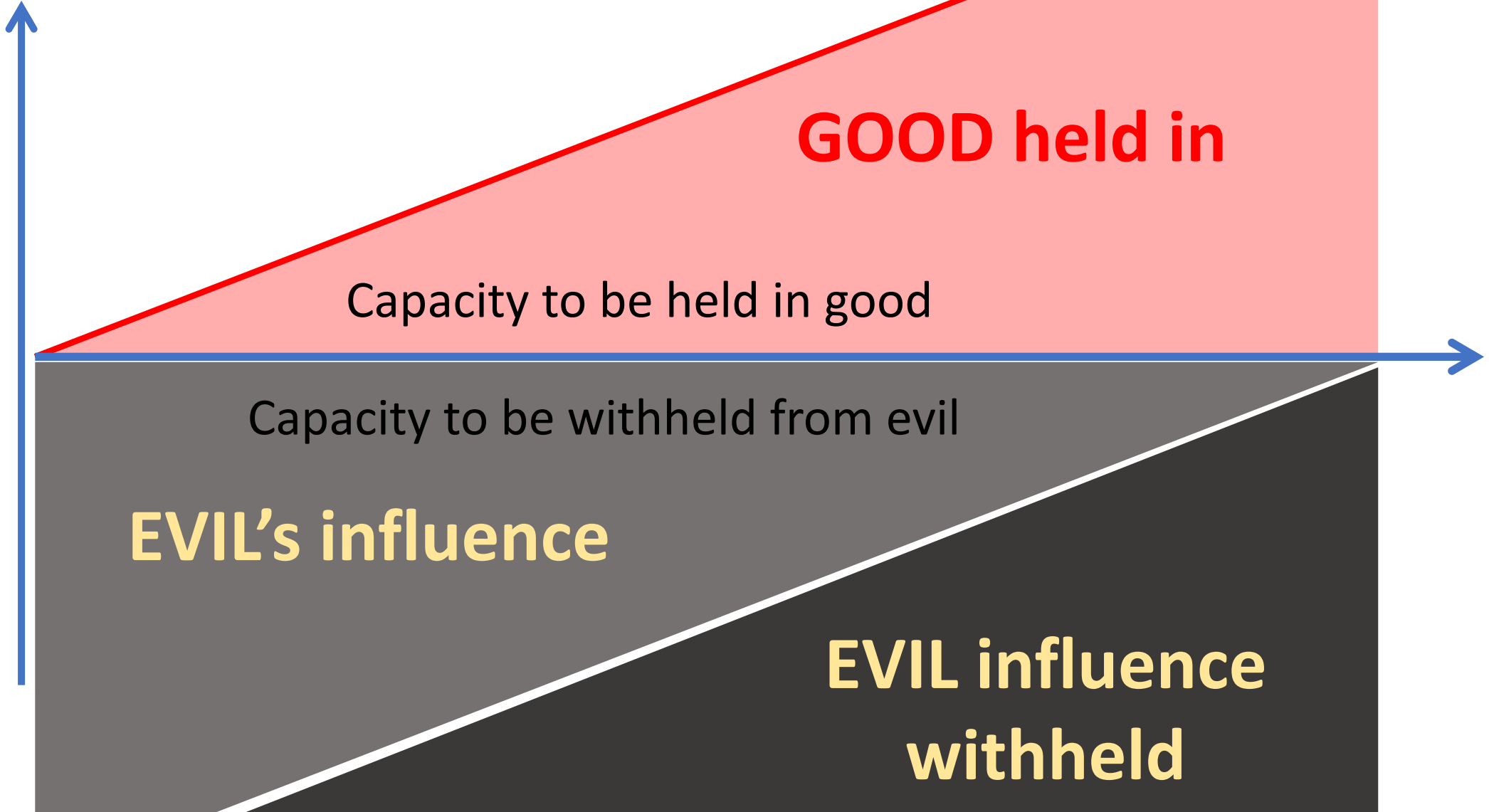
GOOD held in

Capacity to be held in good

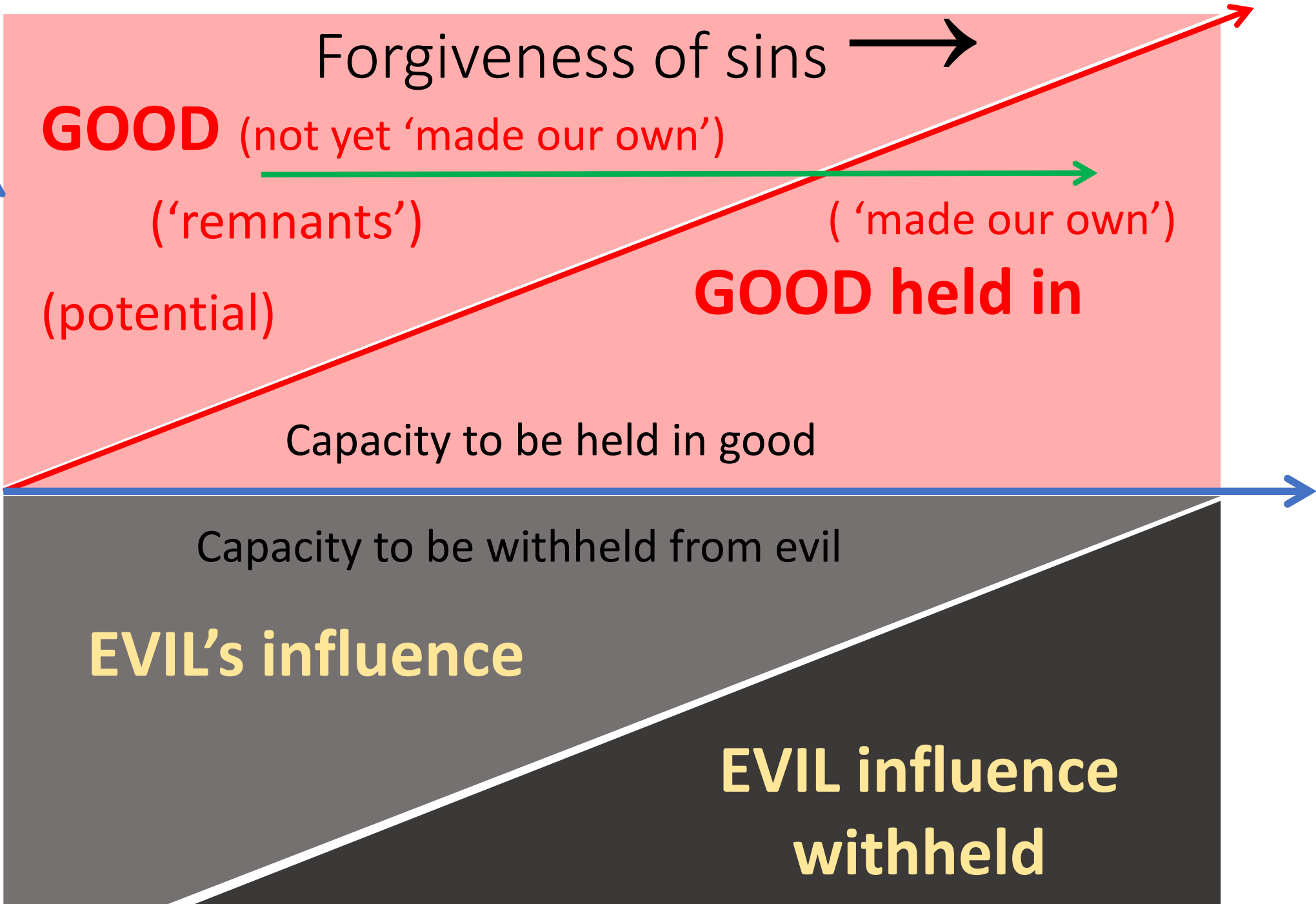
Capacity to be withheld from evil

EVIL's influence

EVIL influence withheld



Repentance



Forgiveness of sins →

GOOD (not yet 'made our own')

('remnants')

(potential)

('made our own')

GOOD held in

Capacity to be held in good

Capacity to be withheld from evil

EVIL's influence

EVIL influence withheld

Actually, we are *surrounded* by
the Lord's goodness,
which He offers to us at *every moment!*
The potential for blessing is unlimited!

