

Father of Love

Removing the Veil of
Fear and Condemnation

Kevin J. Mullins

Father of Love

By Kevin J. Mullins (2020)

Email: lastmessageofmercy@roadrunner.com

Or visit my website at lastmessageofmercy.com

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My mom—for just being the beautiful woman that you are!

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Throughout this book the word “Jehovah” is employed instead of “Lord” except for when quoting other authors and contributors.

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By the Word of Their Testimony

As you read through this book you will find testimonies from people all over the world who are coming to the knowledge of God concerning His loving character. In the 12th chapter of the Book of Revelation we read that Satan and his angels seek to persecute God's people who reside on this earth. They are desperate for us to lose our faith in order that we misrepresent our heavenly Father. Within these trials lashed out upon us by the enemy's violent anger we have this promise:

*"But they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus] and **by the word of their testimony**, and they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die." ~ Revelation 12:11.*

The testimonies within these pages are from various directions and experiences. Some testify of personal experiences in their every-day lives as they encounter situations that require a choice on how they themselves will react. Will it be the way of our heavenly Father or the way of man? Others speak of gems of truth they have found in Scripture concerning the true character of God and how it has affected their lives, while others give us deep rooted insights into the difficult to understand passages of Scripture.

Although we will not be able to answer every question you may have about the character of God, this whole book is my testimony to the undeniable fact that *"God is love"* (1 Jn. 4:8) and that by this love I have experienced a deep change in my life which fuels me to become a better father, friend, ex-husband, brother, employee, and son.

As you read this material, along with these testimonies, we pray that you too will be encouraged as you see God in a whole new light and become influenced by His matchless love inspiring you to completely ...

"Love Jehovah your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength ... and love your neighbor as yourself."
~ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39.

This book is dedicated to my three children:
Isaac John, Haley Jean, and Eliana Rose.

*"May Jehovah bless you and protect you;
May Jehovah make His face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
May Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you,
and give you peace."
~ Numbers 6:24-26 ~*

Father of Love

“Behold what manner of love the Father
has given unto us ...” ~ 1 John 3:1.

1. Lean Not Upon Your Own Understanding

What do you think of when you read, “*God is love.*” (1 Jn. 4:8)? Do you believe it when the prophet Jeremiah says:

*“From afar Jehovah has appeared unto me, saying, ‘Yea, I have loved you with an **everlasting love**: therefore with **loving-kindness** have I drawn you.’ ~ Jeremiah 31:3.*

Do you trust that God loves His creation with an “everlasting love”? Do not look at this word “everlasting” as meaning from NOW through eternity. Look at it from eternity PAST to eternity future. There has never been a time, nor will there ever be a time, when God does not love you. **It doesn’t matter what you’ve done, what you’re doing, or what you will do, our Father has always, and will always love you and show loving-kindness to you.** Always keep in mind it is “loving-kindness” that God will use to draw you to Him. He never uses fear.

*“We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. This is how love has been perfected among us: we will have confidence on the day of judgment because, during our time in this world, we are just like Him. There is no fear in love, but **perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.** We love Him because He first loved us.” ~ 1 John 4:16-19.*

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy,
it does not boast,
it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others,
it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil
but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects,
always trusts, always hopes,
always perseveres.

Love never fails.
1 Corinthians 13:4-8



BibleVerseImages.com

This love in the Greek is called ἀγάπη (*agápe*) and is displayed by sacrificial, affectionate, selfless, service (or, giving) toward others. In all of our contemplations upon the character of God we must be willing to surrender our own preconceived ideas. God has said, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.*” (*Is. 55:8*). We must not put God in a box according to our own ideas and way of life, but instead we need to “*trust in Jehovah with all your heart; and lean not upon your own understanding.*” (*Prov. 3:5*).

**Trust Him when He says He is love.
Trust Him when He says He loves you
“with an everlasting love.”**

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My Law; fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings.” ~ Isaiah 51:6-7.

God’s righteousness is forever. It will never be abolished. The life of righteousness is the only life that’s everlasting. When Jesus promises you “everlasting life” He is not merely promising that you will never die. His

**Set your minds
on things above,**

**not on
earthly
things.**

-Colossians 3:2
BibleVerseImages.com



focus is not to arouse any selfish ambitions to simply live forever, but is speaking of a *lifestyle* that reflects the Father’s righteousness. This righteousness is transcribed for us in His Law (His Torah) — “*Hearken unto Me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My Law.*” When the Law is truly in our hearts we will “know” (experience) the Father’s everlasting life of righteousness. But without the righteousness of God Scripture is clear:

“There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.”

~ Romans 3:10-12.

Notice that “righteousness” and “good” are synonymous with each other. This is a writing style among the Hebrews called *Hebraic parallelism*. When Scripture says our heavenly Father is “righteous” it is saying He is “good.” Jesus echoes this by saying: *“Why do you call Me good? There is no one good except God alone.”* (Mk. 10:18).

Now, it would be dangerous for us to simply try to come up with the definition of “good” (righteousness) without using the Scriptures. Mankind defining what good and evil is, in our own fallen minds, is the result of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We will only co-mingle good and evil together. *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who turn darkness to light and light to darkness, who replace bitter with sweet and sweet with bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”* (Is. 5:20-21).

God is the complete opposite of evil and darkness; for *“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”* (1 Jn. 1:5). The presence of both good and evil is NOT a balanced universe. Since God is perfect love, He only does what is right (righteous) and good. He is absolute truth! So be warned: *“There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way that leads to death.”* (Prov. 14:12).



So what is “good” and “righteous”? Well, let’s go back to the beginning where God Himself first used the word “good”—at Creation. You will see in Genesis chapter one that, after every day of Creation week, God called each

day “good”, then at the very end of the last day of Creation He said “very good” and then was able to rest. Paul wrote:

*“For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes**, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen**, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” ~ Romans 1:20.*

So, the Father’s attributes (His eternal character) are clearly seen in Creation, and we have just learned that Creation displayed goodness.

But what was it about each day that was “good”? Well, what do each of the things He made do? What does the sun do? It GIVES light. It GIVES heat. It GIVES life and vitality to plants, beasts, and humans. What about trees? What do they do? They GIVE resting places and food for birds and other creatures. They GIVE shade. They GIVE oxygen. They GIVE color to the world. How about grass? It GIVES food for the creatures. It GIVES oxygen and cools the air. It GIVES color to the world. How about water? Water GIVES a home for sea creatures. It GIVES us healthy nutrients and cleansing. I think you get the point. The Father’s everlasting character, His righteousness, is a life of GIVING.

“The construction protocol on which God built His universe is known as God’s law. And this law is the law of love, an expression of His nature and character ... A simple example of this law in action is respiration. With every breath we breathe we give away carbon dioxide (CO₂) to the plants, and the plants give back oxygen to us (the law of respiration). This is God’s design for life, a perpetual circle of free giving. It is an expression of God’s character of love, and life is built to operate on it. If you break this law, this circle of giving, by tying a plastic bag over your head and selfishly hoarding your body’s CO₂, you break the design protocol for life, and the result is death. ‘The wages [result] of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23). This circle of giving is the law that God constructed life to operate on.” (Dr. Timothy Jennings, *The Remedy*, Preface).

The conceptual meaning of “our Father” is that He is the eternal PROVIDER. He is the only SOURCE of LIFE who GIVES to all His creatures what is GOOD and needed for physical and spiritual health. Jesus taught:

*“That’s why I’m telling you to stop worrying about your life—what you will eat or what you will drink —or about your body—what you will wear. Life is more than food, isn’t it, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky. They don’t plant or harvest or gather food into barns, and yet **your heavenly Father feeds them**. You are more valuable than they are, aren’t you? Can any of you add a single hour to the length of your life by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies in the field and how they grow. They don’t work or spin yarn, but I tell you that not even Solomon in all of his splendor was clothed like one of them. Now if that is the way **God clothes the grass in the field**, which is alive today and thrown into an oven tomorrow, **won’t He clothe you much better**—you who have little faith? So don’t ever worry by saying, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or ‘What are we going to drink?’ or ‘What are we going to wear?’ because it is the unbelievers who are eager for all those things. Surely your heavenly Father knows that you need all of them! But **first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well**. So never worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” ~ Matthew 6:25-34.*

Yes, our Father is a SERVER—our PROVIDER. The Psalmist wrote: *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament reveals [displays] His handiwork.” (Ps. 19:1); “The heavens proclaim His righteousness, and everyone sees His glory.” (Ps. 97:6).*

Did you know God’s glory is His character of righteousness? Moses beseeched the Father saying, *“Please show Me Your glory” (Ex. 33:18).* In verse 19 God replied:

*“I will cause all My **goodness** to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name [glory/character] of Jehovah before you. I will be **gracious** to whom I will be gracious, and I will show **mercy** on whom I will show mercy.”*

That's what it means to *"proclaim the NAME of Jehovah."* The word "name" in Scripture conceptually means "character." Proclaiming the name of the LORD or Jehovah is to proclaim His character of goodness, grace, and mercy in every word and action. In Exodus 34 we read:

*"And Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name [glory/character] of Jehovah. And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'Jehovah, Jehovah God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and full of goodness and truth.**'" (Vss. 5-6).*

God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel saying, *"I had pity for My holy name [character], which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen wherever they went."* (Ez. 36:21). Here we have professed followers of God (Israel) profaning God's character among the heathen. This was not done only by what they did, but also by what they said. The things that they said about our Father's character were not true which resulted in their own actions being in opposition to His ways. Their own actions, of not being merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and full of goodness and truth, gave a wrong reflection of whom they claimed as their God. As a result, wrong perceptions of the one true God were held and taught among the nations. His name was profaned and they all fell short of the glory (character) of God. This is sin; *"For all have sinned, and fall short of the GLORY of God."* (Rom. 3:23).

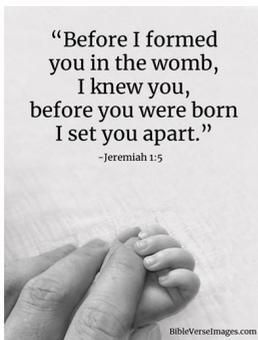
Since Scripture tells us, *"All unrighteousness is sin"* (1 Jn. 5:17), then righteousness is a life without sin. In 1 John 3:4 John tells us, *"He who sins transgresses the Law, for sin is the transgression of the Law."* Unrighteousness is sin, and sin is transgression of God's Law (Torah). Righteousness is living within the protective standards of God's Law while sin is choosing to wander outside of its protection and healing. Paul wrote, *"Owe no man anything except to love one another; for **he that loves another has fulfilled the Law.**"* (Rom. 13:8). Then, after quoting a few of the

Ten Commandments, to show us exactly what standard he is referring to, he concludes: “Love NEVER does anything that is harmful to its neighbor. Therefore, **love is the fulfilling of the Law.**” (Vs. 10).

As you can see, righteousness is an “others-first” life and this unselfish life only comes from God; for He is the source of all that is good and right in the world: “Every generous act of giving and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, **in whom there is no inconsistency or shifting shadow.**” (Jas. 1:17). God has declared: “I am Jehovah, I do not change.” (Mal. 3:6). Since “God is love”, and He does “not change”, because in Him “there is no inconsistency or shifting shadow”, then you can always trust that He will NEVER do anything harmful to you. **Even if you are His enemy.**

When Jesus was on the earth He proclaimed the love of our heavenly Father by saying:

“God has not given us a *spirit of fear*, but of *power and of love and of a sound mind*. So do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...”
~ 2 Timothy 1:7



“You have heard that it was said [by false teachers], ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’; but I say to you, **Love your enemies; bless those cursing you, do well to those hating you; and pray for those who take you by force and persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven.** Because **He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust.** For if you only love those who love you, what reward do you have? ... And if you only greet your brothers, what exceptional thing do you do? ... Therefore, be perfect [completely selfless/merciful], just as your Father in heaven is perfect [completely selfless/merciful].” ~ Matthew 5:43-48.

Notice that loving your enemies and doing good to those that hate you is being compared to the love of “*your Father in heaven.*” The reason you do these good things is because you have become “*children of your Father*” and that’s how your heavenly Father acts. Our Father loves His enemies and does good to all those who hate Him; “***For He is KIND unto the unthankful and to the evil.***” (Lk. 6:35). In the next chapter we will begin to see that Christ died to fix the broken condition of fallen man and to bring us back into harmony with God and His Law.

| <u>Comparison Between our Father and His Law</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <u>The Father Is:</u> | | <u>The Law Is:</u> |
| Luke 18:19 | GOOD | Romans 7:12 |
| Isaiah 5:16 | HOLY | Romans 7:12 |
| Deuteronomy 32:4 | JUST | Romans 7:12 |
| Matthew 5:48 | PERFECT | Psalm 19:7 |
| 1 John 4:8 | LOVE | Romans 13:10 |
| Exodus 9:27 | RIGHTEOUS | Psalm 19:9 |
| Deuteronomy 32:4 | TRUTH | Psalm 119:142,151 |
| 1 John 3:3 | PURE | Psalm 19:8 |
| John 4:24 | SPIRITUAL | Romans 7:14 |
| Malachi 3:6 | UNCHANGABLE | Matthew 5:18 |
| Genesis 21:33 | ETERNAL | Psalm 111:7,8 |

All mankind, both Christian and non-Christian, Theologian and Atheist, Lifeguard and Serial Killer, owes their every breath to God; the only One “*who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them, and who in past generations allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways, though, indeed, He did not leave Himself without witness, doing good by giving us rain from heaven and fruit-bearing seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*” (Acts 14:15-17).

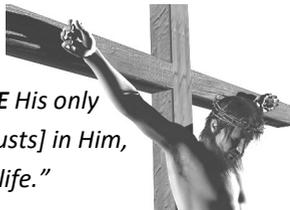
No one, saint nor sinner, eats their daily bread
 if it were not for the everlasting
LOVING MERCY
 of God.

2. God Demonstrates His Loving Mercy Through His Son

All God does is GIVE. Even when most of the world chooses to hate Him, our Father still GIVES.

*“For God so loved the world, that He **GAVE** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [fully trusts] in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

~ John 3:16 ~



Yes, we will receive “everlasting life” — the life of righteousness. Through the indwelling Spirit (life) of the Father, through His Son, we will display the life of sacrificial GIVING—the life of unselfish SERVING. A life that displays the love of God by loving our neighbor. A life of unconditional for-GIVE-ness toward those who hate, insult, and persecute us. A life that only promotes health and life and shuns away evil, destruction, retaliation, and violence. This we do, not by our own power, but by His indwelling righteousness; for *“It is because of Him that you are in Christ [Messiah] Jesus, who has become for us Wisdom from God: our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: ‘Let him who glories, glory in Jehovah.’”* (1 Cor. 1:28-30). We are to always *“Give glory to Him who made heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.”* (Rev. 14:7).

Jesus said, *“let your light shine before people in such a way that they will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Matt. 5:16). Doing good (giving) works is never meant to earn favor with God. We cannot do good works unless the One who is good (giving) is living in us and through us. This is why our main focus in displaying “good works” is so that those around us will glorify our Father in heaven. They will see that He truly is good (giving) and righteous.

It is only by receiving *“Christ in you”* that you truly have life. (Col. 1:27). Our Messiah said, *“I am the Way, and the Truth, and **the Life**. No one comes*

to the Father except through Me.” (Jn. 14:6). He is the Way to understand the Father’s thoughts and way of Life. To fully understand the Father’s true character we are to look at the Father through the life of Jesus who said, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” (Jn. 14:9). Paul said, “in these last days” the Father has “spoken unto us by His Son” who is “the brightness of His [the Father’s] glory [character], and the express image of His person.” (Heb. 1:1-3). And John wrote, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has GIVEN the Son to have life in Himself.” (Jn. 5:26). Jesus has been given the very life of the Father which is to be given to us:

*“And this is the testimony: That God GAVE us everlasting life [righteousness], and **this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has that life.** The one who does not have the Son of God does not have that life. I write these things to you, the ones believing in the name [character] of the Son of God, that you may know that you have everlasting life, and that you may believe in the name [character] of the Son of God.” ~ 1 John 5:11-13.*

This is why it is critical that we read the Old Testament through the eyes of Jesus. Paul says “the gospel [Good News] of Christ” is “the power of God unto salvation ... for in it [the gospel of Christ] **the righteousness [selfless character] of God is revealed ...**” (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul warned that people read the Old Testament with a veil upon their heart (2 Cor. 3:14-15). Due to all the violence and bloodshed they only see a “ministration of death ... and condemnation.” (Vss. 7-9). He goes on to say:

*“Nevertheless, when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord [Jesus], **the veil will be taken away.** Now the Lord [Jesus] is that [life-giving] Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord [Jesus] is, there is freedom.” ~ Verses 16-17.*

And in his letter to the Galatians Paul says, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Gal. 4:6).

Since Jesus is the complete picture (image) of our unchanging Father, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Heb. 13:8).*

By the Word of Their Testimony

When thinking about the verse, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” something got through to me. This means that we may observe only one day in the life of Christ, then extend the principles and character manifested in that one day back 4 days, or 4,000 years, or 4 million years ... and also into eternity. If He truly never changes, which He doesn't, we can come to this conclusion. The way He dealt with the proud Pharisees, or the helpless sinner, or the multitudes who rejected Him, is the same way He has always dealt with them. “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him.**” John 1:18.

~ Malcolm Daniel Reedy (Cleveland, Tennessee, USA)

When perceived correctly, the character of God becomes our delight. Fear and condemnation melts away as He speaks to us saying, *“I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jer. 29:11).* Our Father *“takes delight in you; He renews you in His love; He shouts for joy over you.” (Zeph. 3:17).* He is forever *“a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” (Ps. 86:15).*

Through the life of Jesus we see that our Father is not a vengeful tyrant, but an affectionate sacrificial SERVER

*“Jesus called His disciples and told them, ‘You know that those who are recognized as rulers among the gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors act like **tyrants** over them. **That’s not the way it should be among you.** Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to everyone, because even **the Son of Man [the Messiah] did not come to be served, but to SERVE and to GIVE His life as a ransom for many.**” ~ Mark 10:42-45.*

Out of His everlasting love God demonstrated His mercy by giving up His Son, who was rejected and then murdered in order for all to see the true nature of sin introduced by Satan who *“was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth, because there is no truth in him ... for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* (Jn. 8:44). What is the connection between lying and murdering here? In Matthew 5:21-22 Jesus teaches us that name-calling, hating others, telling lies about them, retaliation, and any form of put-downs, is the same as killing them (see, Jas. 4:11).

This is what Satan (the adversary) did in the beginning. He was a murderer by committing slanderous (devilish) accusations against God. He wants God dead and out of the way (see, Is. 14:12-14). Ezekiel speaks of Satan who was once a “covering cherub” and was “perfect” in his ways from the day he was created, until “iniquity” was found in him (Ez. 28:14-15). Some translations use the word “Lawlessness” in place of “iniquity.” The Hebrew word here is עָוֹל (*eh'-vel*) which literally means to carry out “violent deeds of injustice”, “unrighteousness”, “evil.” Satan is a liar in the fullest sense of the word because he knows our Father’s true character, but has willingly set his mind to slander His name through word and violent actions of injustice in order to lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them; for **it was Satan’s plea that every sin should meet its punishment.** He is the prosecuting “*accuser*” who *“has the power of death.”* (Rev. 12:9-10; Heb. 2:14).¹ It is Satan who introduced a theory of justice inconsistent with mercy.

The thought that Satan is the one who declares punishment for sin may come as a shock to you, but this is because sin has thrown that veil over our eyes. Many believe God has forsaken this world, but Isaiah points out that *“your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins*

¹ Some translations of Heb. 2:14 use the word “had” instead of “has” but the Greek word is present active participle. Satan “has” the power of death because he is the author of sin and death which is in opposition to God’s design.

have hid [clouded] His face from you, that He will not hear.” (Is. 59:2). God has not left you; for He has promised, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you, so that we can boldly say, ‘Jehovah is my HELPER, I shall not fear what man shall do to me.’”** (Heb. 13:5-6). **“He does not despise nor detest the afflicted person; He does not hide His face from him, but He hears him when he cries out to Him.”** (Ps. 22:24). It is because of the false accusations against our heavenly Father that Jesus came to this world. He came to reveal our Father’s true character who is always *“merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and full of goodness and truth”*; for John testifies, *“we beheld His [Jesus’] glory [character], as the only begotten One of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (Jn. 1:14). And since, *“In Him was life”* (Jn. 1:4), **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might have life through Him.”** (Jn. 3:17).

It is not God who condemns the sinner because *“He that believes on Him is not condemned, but **he that does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name [forgiving character] of the only begotten Son of God.**”* (Vs. 18). The condemnation does NOT come from God, but from mankind’s own self-condemnation. This point cannot be emphasized enough. Let’s look at Romans 5:18 as it appears in the *King James Version (KJV)*:

“Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

The words in italics here in the KJV reveal they are not in the Greek manuscript of which this was translated. They were added by the translators. Without the added words it would read:

“Therefore as by the offence of one upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one upon all men unto justification of life.”

In Christ we have the confidence that the Father condemns no man; for Jesus said, *“the Father judges [condemns] no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.”* (Jn. 5:22). So who has judged and condemned “all men” if it isn’t God? It was Adam. *“By the offense of **Adam** [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation.”*

The word *Adam* in Hebrew means “mankind.” Scripture says, God made male and female *“and blessed them, and called **their name** Adam [mankind], in the day when they were created.”* (Gen. 5:2). So, when God created Adam, He created the whole human race in Adam. Sin, through Adam, brought condemnation upon us and *“the wages of sin is death.”* (Rom. 6:23). God is NOT making the death sentence here, SIN IS. It is Satan, the author of sin and death, that is holding us for ransom.

*“Everyone is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and **when sin is full grown, it [sin] brings forth death.**”* ~ James 1:14-15.

God warned Adam and Eve that in the day they ate of the forbidden fruit *“You will surely die.”* (Gen. 2:17). And in Ezekiel 18:20 God says, *“The soul that sins, it will die.”* Please notice what these two passages do not say. They do not say, *“the soul that sins, I [God] will kill you.”* God is not imposing a punishment here, He is lovingly warning that SIN (the act of wandering beyond His protective standard—Law) will kill you, and His desire is to save you from the NATURAL result of a lifestyle of sin (unrighteousness).

“In the pathway of righteousness there is life, and in that lifestyle there is no death.” ~ Proverbs 12:28.

God alone is righteous, and since *“in that lifestyle there is no death”*, then **there is no death in God.**

Jesus, who did nothing on His own authority, and spoke only what the Father taught Him (Deut. 18:18-19; Jn. 7:16; 8:28) declared, *“the ruler of this world [Satan] comes, and he has nothing in Me.”* (Jn. 14:30). Nothing in Satan’s nature was in Christ. Everything about Satan is fear and condemnation, lies and deceit, killing and destruction.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.” ~ 1 Peter 5:8.

Everything about our heavenly Father is hope and mercy, truth and faithfulness, restoration and life.

*“For **whoever finds Me finds life**, and shall obtain protection from Jehovah. But whoever sins against Me destroys himself; **everyone who hates Me loves death.**” ~ Proverbs 8:35.*

Here it is so plain and simple — it is NOT God who kills the sinner; for *“whoever sins against Me **destroys himself**.”* Likewise we read:

*“They wanted none of My counsels and despised all My reproof. Therefore **they shall eat of the fruit of their own way**, and be filled with **their own counsel.**” ~ Proverbs 1:29-31.*

*God’s Law is not
a restrictive fence.
It is a guardrail.*

Eating the forbidden fruit was symbolic of them taking in all the lies that were being taught and entertained at that tree. Through sin a false system of justice was implanted causing fear and condemnation to rule their mind. After their sin Adam and Eve heard God walking in the Garden so they *“hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God among the trees of the Garden.”* (Gen. 3:8). It’s not God who’s hiding His face, but Adam and Eve. Why did they hide? Adam told God, *“I heard Your voice in the Garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked ...”* (Vs. 10). What was he afraid of?

Well, he knew God had said that, in the day they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would surely die. Adam and Eve were afraid that God was coming to accuse, condemn, and sentence them to death. In other words, they thought God was coming to kill them. Those who do not believe He *freely* forgives will not seek His forgiveness and healing. Most in the world today believe our heavenly Father is a stern judge whose eyes are on our every move waiting to accuse and condemn. But God sent His Son into the world to show us that He has NOT condemned the world. He is the One who desires our salvation and restoration. Just listen to God's response after Adam tells Him he hid because he was naked (or, exposed): *"Who told you that you were naked?" (Gen. 3:11)*. In other words, God is not the one who accused and condemned (exposed) Adam of sinning. The condemnation came from Adam's own disbelief in God's forgiveness.

It is the enemy, Satan, who condemns and accuses us of not deserving God's forgiveness. And because of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven the prophet John heard a loud voice in heaven say, *"Salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Anointed One [Messiah] have now come, because **the accuser of our brethren [Satan] has been cast down: the one who accuses them before our God day and night.**" (Rev. 12:10)*.

Satan has warped our thinking of God's character. Many today go about their life believing their sins are far too great for God to forgive. After Cain killed his brother Abel and God reiterated the consequences of such an act to him, most Bibles quote him as saying, *"My punishment is greater than I can bear."* (Gen. 4:13). However, the Hebrew phrase more accurately describes his misunderstanding of God's forgiveness: *"My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven."* (Literal Translation). Built into this misconception of our heavenly Father is the thought of blaming *Him* for our sorrows. Just by the fact they were "afraid" of Him they were accusing and judging Him as being an unforgiving Father which placed (reflected) self-condemnation upon themselves.

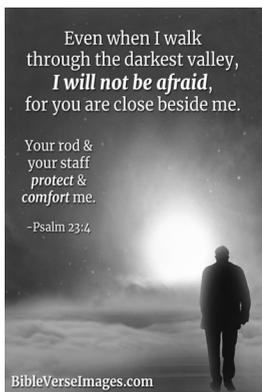
*“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. **For you will be evaluated by the same standard as you evaluate others.**” ~ Luke 6:37-38.*

After God came to them and was inquiring about their sin, Adam, now possessed by the enemy, accused God and his own wife by saying, “The woman, whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” (Gen. 3:12). Eve also played the blame-game by saying, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” (Vs. 13). Not only was she blaming the serpent, but also God who had created the serpent. This is the condemning spirit (nature) we all inherited from our first parents. In an online sermon Pastor Greg Boyd explains: “Judging is when you ascribe worth to yourself at the cost of another. Love is the opposite. Love is ascribing worth to others at the cost of ourselves. The cross is the perfect example of this.” This judging (condemning) one another was all caused by the influence of the slandering serpent in the Garden. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit they, having been warned of the results of sin, began to feel fear and anxiety for the very first time thinking God was going to execute a sentence of death upon them. They chose to submit to their feelings rather than upon the truth of God’s own word that He does not change and is forever “*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and full of goodness and truth.*”

In teaching us how to pray Jesus said, “... *forgive us our debts [sins] as we forgive those who are in debt to us.*” (Matt. 6:12). Notice the forgiveness comes even while the person is “in debt” to the one who is giving the forgiveness. This is our Father’s love. **He forgives even while the person is sinning against Him.**

*“For You, O Jehovah, are GOOD and **ready to forgive,** and **rich in mercy to all** who call upon You.”*

~ Psalm 86:5 ~



"If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not.

For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world"

- John 12:47

Here we see that, because God is "GOOD", He is "ready to forGIVE ... all who call" upon Him. Now, this does not mean that He only forgives those who call upon Him. He is "ready" with the forgiveness even before one calls on Him. His pitcher of love and forgiveness is always full and ready to be poured out; "for Jehovah is GOOD and His mercy is everlasting. His truth endures throughout all generations." (Ps. 100:5). When

you call on Him you will find forgiveness already in Him. It is "everlasting" to all.

The plan of salvation was not an afterthought. God did not say, "Man has sinned, what do we do now?" No, God's plan of salvation (His covenant of mercy) was already in place before Adam ever sinned. This had to be. Why? Because when Adam sinned he would have been instantly wiped out by that sin. But the fact Adam remained reveals that, as soon as Adam sinned, there was a Savior standing in his place who redeemed us with His own precious blood "having been preordained for this very purpose **before the foundation of the world**, but revealed in these last times for your sakes." (1 Pet. 1:18-20). On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, Peter declared that Jesus was "delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts 2:22-24).

Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Lk. 9:23). Do you think it's strange that Jesus would say this even before He was nailed to a cross? And what about this "daily" talk? He wants us to carry a cross of self-denial "daily" when He only carried His cross for a few hours in one day? But let's take into consideration that John says Jesus is "the Lamb slain **from the foundation of the world**." (Rev. 13:8).¹ And Isaiah declares:

¹ The concept of Jesus being compared to a slain lamb will be covered in chapter 6.

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.” ~ Isaiah 63:9.

Yes, the Son of God has been ascribing worth to others at the cost to Himself by carrying His cross daily for nearly 6,000 years. Jesus dying upon the cross is a revelation of the suffering, sorrow and pain He’s been bearing since the day sin was conceived in the heart of Satan. Dear reader, the day God forgave Adam He forgave the whole human race (mankind). No one on this entire planet can say that God has not forgiven them.

*“And even though you were dead in your transgressions ... He nevertheless made you alive with Him, **having forgiven all your transgressions.** He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of debt [self guilt/condemnation] expressed in [man-made] ordinances [dogmas/rulings] that were against us.¹ He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.” ~ Colossians 2:13-14.*

*“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. For He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we may be holy and unblemished in His sight in love. He did this by predestining us to adoption as His children through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of His will; to the praise of the glory of His grace that He has freely bestowed on us in His beloved Son, in whom **we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins,** according to the riches [character] of His grace.” ~ Ephesians 1:3-7.*

“For He [Christ] is the forgiveness for our sins, and not for ours [the believers’] only, but also for the sins of all the world.”

~ 1 Jn. 2:2 (Wycliffe Bible).

**No one on this entire planet can say they were
ever under any condemnation from God**

¹ Ordinances (dogmas): Paul is not referring to God’s Law here as many interpret, but to the judgmental and condemning hearts from “the traditions of men” and “commandments of men” steeped in a performance/appeasement-based religion (Col. 2:8,22; Eph. 2:15).

God has forgiven you even before you were born and committed any sinful acts of your own. Through His “everlasting love” He has forgiven the entire human race even before you ask for that forgiveness or have any faith in it.

“But God demonstrated His love for us by the fact that Christ died for us while we were still sinners ... [and] while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, ... God’s free gift is not like Adam’s offense. For if many people died as the result of one man’s offense, how much more have God’s grace and the free gift given through the kindness of one Man, Jesus Christ, been showered on many people ... For just as through one man’s disobedience many people were made sinners, so also through one Man’s obedience many people will be made righteous.”

~ Romans 5:8-10,15,19.



“Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father. There never was a being on this earth who loved the sinner as did He, and never one who so perfectly and completely hated the sin. His love for the sinner was as infinite as His hatred for the sin. In Him is revealed a God who ever and always completely separates between the sinner and the sin. He hates the sin, because it is the enemy of the sinner, whom He loves.” ~ George E. Fiffeld (1859-1926)

Paul counsels us not to become “*puffed up with pride and fall into **the condemnation from the devil.***” (1 Tim. 3:6). And John says, “*If **our heart [conscience] condemns us**, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Dear friends, if our heart [conscience] does not condemn us, then we have confidence toward God.*” (1 Jn. 3:20-21). Have confidence in our Father of love who, for the sake of His Son, “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*”, has GIVEN to you His righteousness because “***there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***” (Rom. 8:1).

The sin that condemned us all to death is the spirit of condemnation through Adam. Rom 5:16-18; Gen 3:12. We must overcome this in order to be fit for heaven and the new earth and we can through Christ who seeks to give us a new heart which is the heart of God (Jn. 5:22). Every time we condemn another we condemn ourselves to death. This is serious to those with spiritual discernment and who are fully aware of the struggle we go through to not judge others. Matthew 4 and 5 laid out the character of God which is the transcript of the law. We can do good works, perform miracles, do all the right things and still cherish the spirit of condemnation which leads to death. The spirit of criticism and condemnation causes us to separate from God and eternal life.

~ Tina Marie Simon (Montreal, Quebec, Canada)

Dear reader, there is no need for you to live in fear thinking you are under any condemnation from God. No matter what you've done in the past, or whatever you are doing right now, remember and believe you are His child. He will NEVER leave you nor forsake you. He will NEVER cause you any harm. Jesus trusted and believed His Father when He heard the words, *"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* (Matt. 3:17). And He clung onto that belief even when Satan tempted Him saying, *"If You are the Son of God ..."* (Matt. 4:3,6). Do not let Satan cause you to doubt. Believe you **are** a child of God and His grace is sufficient for you (2 Cor. 12:9).

"Jehovah, I have heard the report of what has been said about You; I am awed, Jehovah, by what You have accomplished. In our time repeat those deeds; in our time make it known again that in wrath, You remember MERCY."

~ Habukkuk 3:2 ~

"And [you] arose, and set out towards [your] Father. And when [you] were yet a great way off, [your] Father saw [you], and had compassion, and ran, and threw His arms around [you], and kissed [you] saying, 'My dear child [you] were dead, and now alive. [You] were lost, and now found.' And they all began to celebrate."

~ Luke 15-17-32

3. Removing the Veil on the Wrath of God

*“Therefore, you have no excuse—every one of you who judges. For when you pass judgment on another person, **you condemn yourself**, since you, the judge, practice the very same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who act like this is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on those who practice these things and then do them yourself, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or are you unaware of His rich kindness, forbearance, and patience, that it is God’s kindness that leads you to repentance? But **because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are reserving wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.** For He will render everyone according to what that person has done: eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor, and immortality by patiently doing good; but wrath and fury for those who in their selfish pride refuse to believe the truth and practice wickedness instead.”*

~ Romans 2:1-8.

The “condemnation” that is upon “all men” is the satanic spirit of condemning others. This is what God desires to save us from. Why? Because when you condemn others “you condemn yourself” and reserve “wrath for yourself”; “For He will render everyone according to what that person has done.” This is spoken of as “**God’s judgment**”; for we have seen that “the Father judges no man.” When a man judges he is condemning others. God, however, allows you to “condemn yourselves” and “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.” (Acts 13:46; Job 4:8; Lk. 19:22; Gal. 6:7,8).

“The unrepentant will be condemned, but God doesn’t do it. The guilt unrepented of does!”

~ Deane Gilman

When this takes place the sinner perceives this as an act of God judging/condemning them because this is exactly what they would do to others. Sin has deceived us into thinking God will judge us the way we judge others. However, all God is doing is rendering (giving) man over according to his own deeds. God will not force us to stay, but will allow man to

walk away and reap what they themselves have sown. This is what Scripture says took place during the time of the Flood. Job 22:15-17 says:

*“Have you marked the old way in which the wicked have tread? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood? They said unto God, ‘**Depart from us!**’ And so what more can the Almighty do for them?”*

It is most important here to define God’s wrath (anger). Taking into consideration that our ways are not His ways, we must again submit to the fact that God’s wrath is going to be completely opposite to our way of revealing wrath and anger. In James 1:20 the *King James Version* says, “*For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*” This clearly shows man’s way of wrath is no way near the righteousness of God because, ever since Adam’s sin, mankind falls short of the glory of God. The *International Standard Version (ISV)* says it this way, “*For human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*” Again, human anger is much different than God’s anger. Let’s look at a few statements on God’s “wrath” and “anger” and keep in mind what we have previously learned.

In Jeremiah 33:5 we read, “*The Chaldeans are coming to fight and to fill those houses with the dead bodies of the people that I [God] have struck down in My **anger and wrath**, for I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness.*” Sinful anger and wrath lashes out toward your opponent to inflict harm, God’s righteous wrath and anger is tearfully removing His protective presence. The persistent sinner, who tells God to “depart” from them, will then suffer the natural consequences of their own actions. When we persistently resist His love He does not force our will and, as we walk away from Him, we are faced with our own wrath and anger which we most-often put upon God. Out of His love and mercy He bears this blame desiring that we will see our sin and turn back to Him since He is always right there with open arms. “**Turn us again**, O Jehovah God of hosts, **cause Your face to shine**; and we will be saved.” (Ps. 80:19).

*“For a small moment have I forsaken you, but **with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath [anger] I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you,** says Jehovah your Redeemer.” ~ Isaiah 54:7-8.*

*“And Jehovah said unto Moses, ‘Behold, you will sleep with your ancestors. Afterwards, these people will rise up, and go whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land that they are about to enter. **They will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them,** and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles will befall them; so that they will say in that day, ‘Are not all these evils come upon us, **because our God is not among us?’ And I will surely hide My face** in that day for all the evils which they have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.” ~ Deuteronomy 31:16-18.*

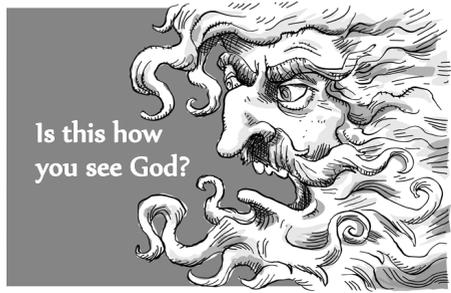
*“**Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger [wrath]:** You have been my help. Do not leave me, nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.” ~ Psalm 27:9.*

When reading these passages keep in mind that it is *sin* that has “hidden” (clouded) God’s face. God allowing His face (presence) to be “hidden” (clouded) from the persistent sinner is His “anger” and “wrath.” It is NEVER lashing out in violence to cause the poor sinner any harm.

Many become confused concerning our Father’s character because Scripture often reads as if He is the one inflicting the pain and punishment. We must pay careful attention to Jesus’ counsel when He asked one of the lawyers: “*What is written in the Law? How do you read it?*” (Lk. 10:26). The question itself implies that most do not understand due to the veil over their eyes. For example: How do you read the following?

*“And again the **anger of Jehovah** was kindled against Israel, and **He** moved David against them to say, ‘Go and number Israel and Judah.” ~ 2 Samuel 24:1.*

The conclusion we might get from reading this passage is that, as a result of His anger, God is the one who moved David and told him to number the people. However, read the following statement from 1 Chronicles 21:1 referring to the same account:



*“And **Satan** stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”* So, how do you read it? Some people read it as a contradiction and use it to discredit Scripture, but when you remove the veil and understand what’s really going on it all makes perfect sense. The “anger of Jehovah” is the removing of His protective presence which permitted Satan to come in and provoke David to number the people. Remember, God will not force His love upon anyone. The one who willfully resists and rejects God’s love is ultimately committing suicide; for all life comes from God.

The Hebrew word for God’s anger is אַף (*aph*) which is the same root word for His longsuffering (*anaph*) character toward sinful man. It means an intense heavy breathing (grief) through the nostrils.

God’s anger = His intense grieving knowing He will have to give the unconverted man over to that which he selfishly desires

Say I had a pitcher of water and offered you and a friend some of the water to drink. You both hold out your drinking glasses and I fill your friend’s glass to the rim, but as I’m filling your glass you cover the opening with your hand and say, “that’s enough” when the glass is about half full. Who did I give more water to? Obviously to your friend, even though I would have gladly poured the same amount of water into both of your glasses, but you prevented me from doing so. Now, compare this to God’s love. God can only pour as much love into your heart as you permit Him to. His love is always being poured out, but you have the choice to block as much as you want.



It is because of our fallen condition that mankind perceives God's judgment in a negative light. We reflect our own system of justice upon God, but we are clearly told, "He loves **righteousness and judgment**: the earth is full of the **godness of Jehovah.**" (Ps. 33:5). One could point out that Psalm 89:14 says, "**Justice and judgment** are the foundation of Your throne...", however, the verse continues as it defines what God's justice and judgment are by using Hebraic parallelism: "... **mercy and truth** shall go before Your face."

**It is clear that the foundation of God's justice is MERCY
and God's judgment is TRUTH**

*"You will do no unrighteousness in judgment ... but in **righteousness** you will **judge your neighbor** ... [how?] ... You will **LOVE** your neighbor as yourself; for I am Jehovah." ~ Leviticus 19:15,18.*

*"He will **judge the world in righteousness**, He will minister judgment to the people in **uprightness.**" ~ Psalm 9:8.*

God's judgment is not based upon an imposed law system where He's angry at YOU for breaking His rules and now He has to punish you for it. God's judgment is based upon a design Law system where He is angry at SIN because it harms the sinner whom He loves. Look at the verses above. Judgment and righteousness go hand in hand, and we have seen that "In the pathway of righteousness there is life, and in that lifestyle there is no death." (Prov. 12:28). The "judgment" of God is never a death decree against the sinner.

God's judgment is His merciful decision (covenant) to save us from sinning by His everlasting love and mercy.

“The will of God is our sanctification. 1 Thess. 4:3. He wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. 1 Tim. 2:4. And He ‘accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.’ Eph. 1:11 ... ‘the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.’ Titus 2:11, R.V. God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given it to him; but the majority spurn it and throw it away. **The Judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was GIVEN to every man and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession** ... Thank God for the blessed hope! The blessing has come upon all men ... God, who is no respecter of persons, ‘has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.’ Eph. 1:3. The gift is ours to keep. **If anyone has not this blessing, it is because he has not recognized the GIFT, or has deliberately thrown it away.**” ~ (E. J. Waggoner, *Glad Tidings*, pp. 13,14,66).

Can you see how the “anger” of Jehovah is tearfully giving man over to the selfishness we sow by allowing us to reap its destruction? When the Israelites were wandering in the desert for 40 years they began to murmur in disapproval of the simple diet of manna that God had been feeding them. What did God do? He permitted them to walk outside of His protective grace which caused flocks of quail to settle down instead of manna. In their sinful cravings they ate until it made them sick and ran out their nostrils (Num. 11:4,31-35). When Scripture says that God “sent” or “caused” this event the writer is using a common Hebraic idiom meaning He had “given them over” to their own desire of wanting Him to depart from them.

*“[By the absence of His presence] He stirred up the east wind in the heavens and drove the south wind by His might. He caused meat to rain on them like dust and winged birds as the sand of the sea. He caused these to fall in the middle of the camp and all around their tents. So they ate and were very satisfied, **because He gave them their own desire.**”*

~ Psalm 78:26-29. (Words in brackets my own).

In Romans 1:18 Paul explains that **“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress**

*the truth in unrighteousness.” Then he says, “God also **gave them up** to uncleanness [Vs. 24] ... God **gave them up** unto vile affections [Vs. 26] ... God **gave them over** to a reprobate mind [Vs. 28].” 2 Thess. 2:10-11 says, those who “receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ... God shall **send them** [give them over to] strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Yes, He will “put [permit] a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of theirs.” (1 Kgs. 22:23).*

When the Israelites were finally in their land they desired to have a king over them. Although God had previously told them, “Be sure to appoint over you the king Jehovah your God chooses” (Deut. 17:14-20), they instead wanted one who had the same characteristics “like the other nations.” (1 Sam. 8:5-6). In response to this God gives them over to their own desire by saying to the prophet Samuel:

*“ ... Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.**” ~ 1 Samuel 8:7.*

As a result, Saul, a self-absorbed, blood-thirsty tyrant, became their king (Vss. 11-22). Through the prophet Hosea God spoke out again against Israel’s disbelief saying:

*“O Israel, **you have destroyed yourself**, your only help is in Me. I will be your King: where is any other that may save you in all your cities? ... **I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath.**” ~ Hosea 13:9-11.*

When Israel rejected God as supreme King they walked out from under His protective presence which permitted an unruly paganistic king to reign over them at their own request.

But what exactly does it mean that God “took him away in My wrath”? In 1 Chronicles chapter 10 it is reported that “Saul died for his transgressions which he committed against Jehovah” (Vs. 13). Then in the very next verse it

says, “Therefore He [God] slew him” (Vs. 14). However, knowing what we now know concerning God’s wrath, do you really believe it was God Himself who came down and killed Saul? Or, are we to understand it better by taking away the veil? How do you read it? Well, when you allow Scripture to explain itself we see that, as God tearfully removed His protective grace because of Saul’s persistent rejection, Saul actually “destroyed himself” by committing suicide with his own sword (1 Sam. 31:3-5; 1 Chron. 10:3-5). Those who do not resist God’s love, however, willfully declare:

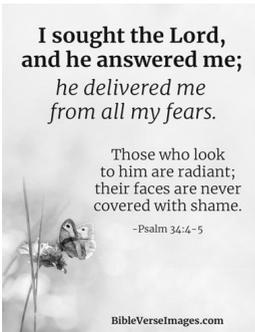
“Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me, and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting.”

~ Psalm 139:23-24.

By the Word of Their Testimony

Let’s go back to the garden of Eden and that perplexing forbidden tree. If God had not made that tree, would it have been possible for humankind to love as God loves? For love, to be love, requires that it be freely given. For love to be freely given, we must also have the liberty to not love. Love is always a choice; love cannot be commanded or coerced. If God would have created our first parents and placed them in the garden without providing some tangible way whereby they could have chosen not to love and trust him, it would not have been possible for them to love as God himself loves. Just as God is our Source of life, he is also our Source of genuine love—life and love are inseparable. To be created in God’s image gives each of us the potential to become a loving friend to our Creator. God did not place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the restriction forbidding eating from its branches as an arbitrary test of our obedience to him, but as an assurance that he values our freedom of choice so highly that he was willing to take the risk that we *could* choose to turn from him. When we understand the reason why God placed the forbidden tree in the garden, we will not accuse him of being a self-serving dictator.

~ Jay A. Schulberg (*Acts of our Gentle God*, pp. 12,13);
Grand Marais, Minnesota, USA



God loves us by exposing our wicked ways and thoughts. Not in a condemning way, but so that we will see our sins and confess them to Him at once, so that **He** can be “justified to **FORGIVE** us our sins and **CLEANSE US** from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn. 1:9). The goal of the gospel (Good News) about our loving Father is that He cleanses us from the practice of all unrighteousness. Remember, Romans 1:18 declares:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

Did you truly catch what that says? God’s wrath is NOT against man, but against the “ungodliNESS” and “unrighteousNESS” of man. This is why God is longing to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Anyone who still willfully clings onto their darling little sins will perish as those sins are being eradicated from God’s universe. You must allow Him to sever you from sin. You will only destroy yourself by clinging to sin because the law of self-serving is self-destruction.

Your perception of who God is will determine your own thoughts and actions. Many things written concerning God’s character in Scripture come from fallen man’s perception of God. For example: Most people have heard the saying, “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.” This comes from Job 1:21, but did you know this is actually Job’s *wrong* conclusion about God? Job also said God mocks people (Job 9:22-24); and he questions God by insinuating that He glories or laughs at a sinner’s plans (10:3). He even perceives God as hunting him as a fierce lion (10:16-17,20). He then becomes so self-condemned that he states, “I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.” (10:19). As he began to realize his misunderstandings concerning God’s character he cried out:

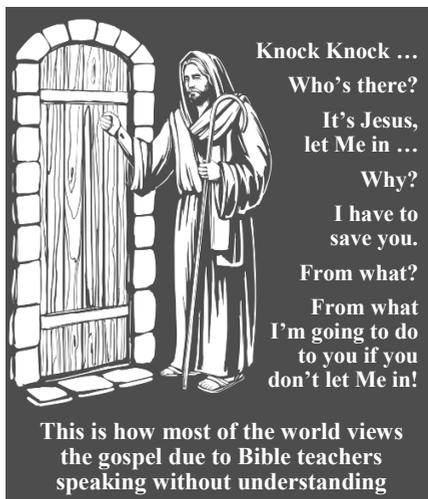
“How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin ... What I don’t see instruct me! If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” ~ Job 13:23; 34:32.

Praise Father that He hearkened unto Job’s cry and, as his eyes were opened, he confessed and repented in prayer:

“I have spoken without understanding; awesome things beyond that which I know ... I’ve heard You [God] with my ears; and now I’ve seen You with my eyes. Therefore I despise myself, and I repent in dust and ashes!” ~ Job 42:3-6.

“It can be easy to be distracted by language used by prophets and Bible writers that make God appear to be a punishing, vengeful God relying on threats to intimidate people into submission. Yet **if we stick to the core truth that the only accurate revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, we can begin to see how much of Scripture is reflective of perceptions of human beings about God more than the truth as it is in Jesus.** Any discrepancies between the two must always be answered by Jesus’ version of God over everything that appears to contradict what He revealed and demonstrated.” (Floyd Phillips, *Vengeance, characterofgod.org*).

Why does it seem God is raising His voice with threats at times? Because we are stubborn ignorant children and God is willing to be misunderstood if it means He will get past our stubbornness and save us from destroying ourselves, just as any loving parent would raise their voice and yell at their child in a “threatening” (alarming) way who is blindly, or perhaps rebelliously, running toward a cliff.



Another great example of God's judgment and men speaking without understanding is when *"a Canaanite woman ... came to Him [Jesus], crying out, 'Master, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is miserably possessed by a demon.'* But **Jesus kept silent. So His disciples came and urged Him, 'Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.'**" (Matt. 15:22-23). Due to Jesus' intentional silence the disciples assumed He judged like them and projected onto Him their own prejudice (condemnation) against this gentile woman (cf. Psalm 50:16-21). Jesus, in order to expose their selfishness, said to the woman, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Vs. 24). Just imagine the minds of the disciples saying, "That's right Jesus, You tell her!" Then the woman, kneeling before Him, begged, *"Master, help me!"* (Vs. 25). But Jesus responds, *"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."* (Vs. 26). Now the selfish hearts of the Jewish disciples are puffing up with pride as Jesus is speaking like them; for God says, *"out of your own mouth will I judge you."* (Matt. 19:22; Eccl. 12:14). The woman replies, *"Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."* (Vs. 27). The disciples eagerly await for Jesus' final words and judgment upon this "gentile dog" as He says, *"'Oh woman, your faith is great! Let it be done for you as you desire.'* And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Vs. 28). Yes, the Father was in Jesus, lovingly exposing the evil hearts that "assume" He judges and condemns like fallen sinful man. This precious gentile woman was indeed one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus came to redeem; because anyone who receives Jesus becomes a true "Israelite" and an heir "according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 9:6).

So I ask you this—Have you spoken without fully understanding God's anger, judgment, and wrath? Have you said in your heart:

"How long, Jehovah? Will You hide Yourself forever?

Will Your wrath [anger] burn like fire?"

~ Psalm 89:46 ~

4. Our God is a Consuming Fire

*“And it came to be, on the third day in the morning, that there were **thunders and lightnings**, and a **thick cloud** on the mountain. And the sound of the ram’s horn was very loud, and all the people who were in the camp **trembled**. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the*



*mountain. And Mount Sinai was in **smoke**, all of it, because **Jehovah descended upon it in fire**. And its smoke went up **like the smoke of a furnace**, and all the mountain trembled exceedingly. And when the blast of the ram’s horn sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. And Jehovah came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And Jehovah said to Moses, ‘Go down, and warn the people, lest they break through unto Jehovah to see, and many of them fall. And let the priests who come near Jehovah set themselves apart too, **lest Jehovah break out against them.**’ And Moses said to Jehovah, ‘The people are not able to come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Make a border around the mountain and set it apart.’ And Jehovah said to him, ‘Come, go down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to Jehovah, lest He **break out against them.**’ And Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.” ~ Exodus 19:16-25.*

After reading this passage, and meditating upon everything that we have been discussing, why do you suppose Moses eagerly walked up and down the mountain amidst “thunders and lightnings”, “smoke”, and “fire” while the rest of the Israelites “trembled” in fear? And why is it that God permitted Moses and Aaron to go up the mountain, but if any of the others tried He would “break out against them”? Will our Father of love really cause them harm? After all, in the letter to the believing Hebrews it is written, *“Our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:29)*. Or, is it something about the people that is causing them to *perceive* God in a different light?

*“And the GLORY of Jehovah dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the GLORY of Jehovah was **like a consuming fire** on the top of the mountain, **in the eyes of the children of Israel**. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And it came to be that Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”*

~ Exodus 24:16-18.

Here we see that God’s “glory” (His character) was “*Like a consuming fire ... in the eyes*” of the people. Like Adam of old, in their fear-filled “eyes” (mind/perception) God appeared like a consuming fire ready to devour them. Moses, however, “*went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain*” without being consumed by any fire. Years earlier Moses had witnessed a small example of this when he saw a burning bush. Scripture says, although the bush was burning, it was not consumed:



*“Then the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him **in a flame of fire** from within a bush. So he looked and saw **the bush burning with fire, yet it was not consumed**. Moses thought, ‘I will go now, and see this great sight. **Why is the bush not burnt?**’ When Jehovah saw that he turned to look, He called to him out of the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ So he answered, ‘Here am I.’” ~ Exodus 3:2-4.*

Moses asked, “*Why is the bush not burnt?*” What was it about that bush that made it fireproof?

In the Book of Daniel we read about the king of Babylon who had erected a golden image of himself and commanded all to bow in reverence. Notice the punishment for disobedience: “*whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into the midst of **a furnace of blazing fire***.” (Dan. 3:11). However, at the appointed time of worship, king Nebuchadnezzar

began to hear the reports which said three Hebrew captives — *Hananiah*, *Mishael*, and *Azariah* (also known by their Babylonian captive names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego) did not bow and worship the image (Vs. 12). They were immediately brought before the king who inquired, *“Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you don’t serve my gods or worship the golden image that I set up? ... if you do not worship, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire! Then what god will be able to deliver you out of my hands?”* (Vss. 14-15).

The three Hebrews were bound and cast into the fiery furnace which was heated *“seven times hotter”* than it commonly was (Dan. 3:19-21). And *“because the king’s order was so urgent and the furnace so extremely hot, a raging flame killed those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.”* (Vs. 22). **The king’s own men were burned to death by the flame.** However, not so for the three faithful Hebrews. Scripture says that king Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and said, *“Look! I see **four men** walking about unbound and unharmed in the middle of the fire, and **the fourth has the appearance like the Son of God!**”* (Vs. 25).

The king then cried out to the three Hebrews saying:

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here!’ So Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out from the middle of the fire. When the satraps, administrators, governors and royal ministers had gathered around, they saw that **the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men. Not a hair of their head was singed, nor were their robes scorched, nor was there a smell of fire on them.**” ~ Vss. 26-27.

The three Hebrew slaves were in the fiery furnace, but were not consumed. The only things consumed by the fiery furnace were the ropes that bound them and the king’s own soldiers who were casting them into the furnace. What made the difference?

*“ ‘Now I will arise,’ says Jehovah. ‘Now I will be exalted. Now I will lift Myself up. You conceive chaff, you will give birth to stubble. **Your own spirit [breath/life] is a fire that will consume you.** Then peoples will be burned as lime, like thorns cut down, burned in the fire. Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done, and you who are near, acknowledge My might’ ...”*

~ Isaiah 33:10-14.

To those “who are afar off”, Jehovah is perceived as a fire ready to punish all sinners, and yet they are consumed by their own selfish lifestyle. This is because sin cannot dwell in the presence of God, and those who cling to sin will be like “stubble” and “consume” away with sin. Why were not the three Hebrews consumed by the fire? Because “the Son of God” was in their midst whom they had complete faith in. Will the “consuming fire” consume you in your sins or will you allow it to PURIFY you FROM sin? Notice how Isaiah continues his thought ...

*“ ‘... **Who among us can live with the consuming fire?’ ‘Who among us can live with everlasting burnings?’ One who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly, who refuses unjust gain by extortion, who shakes his hands free of bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from looking on evil.” ~ Isaiah 33:14-15.***

Take careful note that it is the one “*who walks righteously*” who will “*live with the consuming fire*” and “*live with everlasting burnings.*” It is those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, claiming HIS righteousness as their own, who will live eternally in “the fire” — not the unrepentant as is commonly, but erroneously, taught. The prophet John wrote: “*And **death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.** This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into **the lake of fire.**” (Rev. 20:14-15). Many are taught that hell is the lake of fire where all the bad people go, but since “hell” is cast into “the lake of fire”, then they must be different things.*

Hell is the state of separation from Jehovah. The Hebrew word is *sheol* and in Scripture it refers to the grave or the dust of the earth. In the *King James Version* of the Bible it is translated as “grave” 31 times, “hell” 31 times, and “pit” 6 times.

Psalms 9:17 says, “*The wicked will be turned into hell ...*” (KJV). However, the Hebrew verb used for “be turned” is translated as “turned back” in verse 3. Thus verse 17 literally says the wicked “shall return” to hell. How is it that they will “return” to hell? We can see a clear comparison when we read another verse which tells us what happens at death: “*His breath departs, he returns to his dust [self’s origin]. In that very day his thoughts perish.*” (Ps. 146:4). At death our bodies decompose back into the earth (dust) and our thoughts (our intellect/being/plans) perish. Man returns to hell/sheol (the grave) where he unconsciously awaits his resurrection.

If you remember from our last chapter Job wanted to die. Listen to what he says as recorded in the *King James Version*: “*O that thou wouldst **hide me in the grave**, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!*” (Job 14:13). The Hebrew word translated as “grave” here is *sheol* which, as we have seen, can be translated as “hell.” In fact, the *Douay Version* translates it like this: “*Who will grant me this, that thou mayest **protect me in hell**, and hide me till thy wrath pass?*” He’s placing his trust in the Almighty who will preserve his life while buried and not let him see total, or eternal, corruption. His hope is in the resurrection when he would be delivered from hell “*at the last day*” (Jn. 6:39-40, 44,54)—“*Death and hell [the grave] gave up the dead who were in them.*” (Rev. 20:13).

I’m sure that it is a strange thing for you to hear that Job desired to be “protected” in *hell* from all his sufferings. We have been so blinded and deceived believing that “hell” is a “lake of fire” where our Father of love casts all the people who do not love Him to suffer eternal torture. Do you

really believe a Father of love would say, “love your enemies” and then turn around and torture His enemies?

In describing the fate of those who reject God’s loving mercy the Book of Revelation says, “*fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them ... and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ... and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.*” (Rev. 20:9-10).¹ Some translations use the word “torture” instead of “tormented.” But we must ask, is this describing a God of love? Some say it is because God loves His people so much that He rids the earth of all our enemies who spread sin. This, they say, is God’s justice. But again, is this a correct display of our Father of love who is always “*kind to the unthankful and to the evil*” (Lk. 6:35)? Besides, Scripture says, “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because **fear has torment.** He that fears is not made perfect in love.*” (1 Jn. 4:18). It is “fear” that causes torment, not God.

The Greek word for “tormented” in Revelation 20:10 is βασανίζω (*bansanizo*) meaning, “To test the purity of metals such as gold and silver by rubbing them upon a touchstone.” The “fire” is used metaphorically as testing one’s purity (or fitness) for the kingdom of God.

*“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the Day shall declare it, because it shall **be revealed by fire**; and **the fire shall try [test] what kind of work each has done.** If what someone has built survives, he shall receive a reward. If someone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as through **fire.**” ~ 1 Corinthians 3:13-15.*

¹ The Greek word translated as “brimstone” is (*theion*) which is from the word *theos* and means “divinity.” It should be translated as “divine incense” or “holy fire” because it is the fire of God’s purifying presence. In Rev. 14:9-11 it says, “the smoke from their torment ascends up forever and ever.” Smoke is what remains *after* something is burned. This is symbolic of the memory of how sin caused such sorrow and destruction. It will never be forgotten, thus the reason why “*affliction will not rise up a second time.*” (Nah. 1:9). For more info on this topic see the book, *Consuming Fire*, available for free download at fatheroflove.info.

*“Dear friends, do not be astonished that a **trial by fire** is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in the degree that you are partakers in the sufferings of Christ, so that when His glory [character] is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad.” ~ 1 Peter 4:12-13.*

Do you notice that some will rejoice at the fire, while others will fear? Those who rejoice will not suffer “torment” when the glory (character) of God is fully revealed because “when He shall appear **we shall be like Him**, and everyone who has this hope based upon Him keeps himself **pure**, just as Christ is **pure.**” (1 Jn. 3:2-3). The “torment” that the lost will experience is mental anguish caused by a refusal to repent which magnifies self-condemnation.

*“Unconditional love (Agape Love) **never punishes or hurts us.** Rather, it gently corrects and teaches. It continues to love us even when we are unlovable. That’s how God loves **every single one of us!**”*
~ Stephanie G. Cox

*“Therefore, shall all hands be faint, and **every man’s heart shall melt**: And they shall be afraid, pain and anguish will seize them; they’ll writhe like a woman in labor. They’ll look aghast at one another, and **their faces shall be as flames.**” ~ Isaiah 13:7-8.*

*“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For **he that sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh**, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.”*
~ Galatians 6:7-8.

It is the very presence of a holy God that will bring this fiery “torment” to the unbeliever. God is NOT throwing fiery lightning bolts at those who do not love Him. Their own guilt and self-condemnation torments them and will consume their entire being. The consuming fire that kills those who resist is not the fire of combustion as can be seen in the instance of Nadab and Abihu found in Leviticus 10:1-5. The fire which consumes them to ashes comes after the erring soul has died. God does not burn people alive.

**What consumes a lie? TRUTH and JUDGMENT;
What consumes selfishness? LOVE and MERCY**

By the Word of Their Testimony

In my own experience, I have seen that only the true love of God can change my heart and give me real surety and purpose. When I went through a very serious life crisis, all my values, all my goals, everything I had lived for, were crushed and destroyed, and my relationship with God was severely tested. Does He still love me, even now, when everything seemed to have been broken down in my life, where I was tormented by the feeling of having completely failed, leaving nothing of my own works to please Him? In this dark valley, He remained my only hope, my only refuge. I prayed, I pled, I sought to truly understand and experience His love and care, and gently, tenderly, and patiently He opened up to me a deeper understanding of His agape love, which is abundantly forgiving, abundantly self-sacrificing, abundantly patient and can never be exhausted. Truly, our "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1: 5). Truly, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4:8). He has saved me and put my feet on a solid rock, He has given me a new life, even to work for Him in ministry, and I thank and praise Him.

~ Jutta Deichsel (Perleberg, Germany)

It's the *destruction* that is eternal. Only those who "*believe*" will receive "*eternal life*" and not "*perish*" as the unbelievers (Jn. 3:16). The wicked will receive eternal "*death*" (Rom. 6:23), not eternal life screaming in agony. The wicked, will be "*no more*" (Prov. 10:25; Ps.37:10). The Psalmist says they will "*vanish*" or, "*consume away*" (Ps. 37:20). They will be "*cut off*" and "*destroyed*" (Ps. 37:28,34,38). Like Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by "eternal fire", they will eternally return to "*ashes*" (Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6; Mal. 4:1,3). And because our soul is not a separate entity than our being (Gen. 2:7; KJV), God says, "*the soul that sins, it will die.*" (Ez. 18:20). All this because they push away their loving Father and wander

beyond His jurisdiction; for He will not use force nor interfere with our free choice. *“I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: [how?] **their own way** have I brought upon their heads ...”* (Ez. 22:31). Permitting the lost (those who resist His love) to destroy **themselves** is God’s fiery wrath.

In the first chapter of Job we see Satan making accusations that Job only follows God because God has placed a protective hedge about him. He challenges God saying, *“stretch out Your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will curse You to Your face.”* (Vs. 11). Now notice verse 12: *“Then Jehovah told Satan, ‘Very well then, everything he owns is in **your power**, only you may not extend your hand against him.’ So Satan left Jehovah’s presence.”*

Keep in mind the wording we have here. Satan tells God to stretch out His *“hand and strike everything he owns”* and then we see that in reality it is Satan who is causing Job all the problems. Instead of striking Job with His hand, God removes His protective hand permitting Satan to strike saying, *“everything he owns is in your power”* and the only power Satan displays is violent force, destruction and evil. However, notice verse 16 when a messenger comes and tells Job ...

*“**The fire of God is fallen from heaven**, and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and **consumed them**, and I alone am left.”*

This is nearly the same wording we have seen in Revelation 20. Notice how Job’s messenger wrongly perceives the destructive fire as coming directly from God, but all God has done is removed His protective hand.

Many times throughout Scripture God uses historical events and past tyrannical leaders to illustrate the true nature of Satan and his kingdom. A couple of these instances we briefly sited earlier on page 12 regarding Isaiah chapter 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28. Notice how Ezekiel continues to give us insights into the fall of Satan as God declares:

*“You [Satan] were upon the holy mountain of God, you walked up and down in the midst of **the stones of fire**. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you ... I will cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; I will destroy you, o covering cherub, from the midst of **the stones of fire** ... I will bring **a fire from the midst of you**, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you.” ~ Ezekiel 28:14-18.*

What a scene. What are these “stones of fire”? “*Jehovah came from Sinai ... He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went **a fiery law** for them.*” (Deut. 33:2). The “stones of fire” are the Ten Commandments. Before his fall, Satan used to walk in the way of God’s protective fiery Law. He was “*perfect ... until iniquity [lawlessness] was found*” in him. It is this guilt and self-condemnation that will ignite a tormenting “*fire from the midst*” of him and all his sympathizers.

Also keep in mind God clearly said, “I will cast you ...”, “I will destroy you ...”, “I will bring a fire ...”, “I will bring you to ashes ...” But how do we read it? Again God’s answer is that He will permit the unrepentant to destroy each other:

*“ ... Because you have set your heart as the heart of God, I will therefore bring strangers upon you, the most terrifying of nations, and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and they shall defile your brightness. They shall bring you down to the pit, and you will die the death of those who are slain, in the heart of the seas ... you will die the death of the uncircumcised [unrepentant] **by the hand of strangers** ...” ~ Ezekiel 28:6-8,10.*

It all matters how your heart and mind react in His presence. Will it be fear and condemnation or faith and acceptance trusting in His everlasting love and mercy? A great example of this is found in Exodus 9:12 where we read, “*And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh*”, but in verse 34 it says Pharaoh “*sinned yet more and hardened his heart.*” Well, who was it that hardened the heart of Pharaoh? God or Pharaoh himself? It all depends on

how you look at it. Charles Spurgeon once said: “The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins.” Now, is it the sun doing this or is it the ingredients in the wax and clay reacting to the sun? The sinful heart of Pharaoh was hardened by the way it reacted to a righteous God. “*An unrighteous man is an abomination to the righteous, and he who is straight in the way is an abomination to the wrong.*” (Prov. 29:27).

In Revelation chapter 11 we read of “two witnesses” that shall prophesy for God (Vs. 3). God says, “*if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and will devour their enemies.*” (Vs. 5). John the revelator is seeing what God had previously told Jeremiah: “*Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.*” (Jer. 5:14). The “two witnesses” represent God’s word (Jn. 5:39; Matt. 24:14). John then says the two witnesses will be killed for a short while and “*they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry ... because these two prophets tormented [bansanizo] them that dwell upon the earth.*” (Vs. 10).¹ Are these two witnesses causing physical pain and torment on those who reject their words? No. The torment is mental anguish from self-condemnation. The words and lifestyle of those who permit the Spirit of Jesus to live through them are a constant rebuke to those who resist; for Jesus is “*the Word of God*” in the flesh (Jn. 1:1,14).

“For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one [rejecter of God’s love], we are an odor of death and demise; to the other [receiver of God’s love], a fragrance that brings life.” ~ 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. (see also, 2 Corinthians 3:6).

¹ For sake of space we will not be discussing these “two witnesses” in detail. Needless to say, the two witness are not two literal people who arrive on the scene at the end of time, but are the two great witnesses of God’s love and mercy revealed in both Old and New Testaments. The Torah is nothing less than the gospel embodied, while the gospel is the Torah unfolded and revealed. The Torah is the great root, and the gospel is the sweet smelling blossom and the fruit of which it bears. (see, Gal. 3:8-9; Matt. 3:11). It’s not Jesus who judges but “*The word I have spoken will judge him at the last day.*” (Jn. 12:47-48).

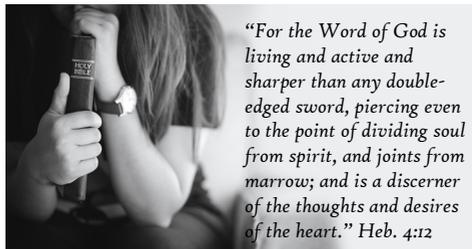
*“Is not **My Word** like a **fire?**”, declares Jehovah, ‘and like a hammer that shatters a rock?’”*
~Jeremiah 23:29

This mental anguish, caused by one’s stony heart, will trigger what’s called “*stress-induced cardiomyopathy*” as it did to Ananias and Sapphira when their unrepented guilt and sin was exposed (see, Acts 5:1-11). Jesus said people will faint due to “*men’s hearts failing them for fear.*” (Lk. 21:26).

*“For they [the unrepentant, not God] have made ready their heart [self-centered affections] like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleeps all the night; in the morning it [their heart] **burns as a flaming fire.**” ~ Hosea 7:6.*

*“**This is the judgment**, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. **For everyone who does evil hates the light, and doesn’t come to the light**, lest his works would be exposed. **But he who does the truth comes to the light**, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God.” ~ John 3:19-21.*

Satan has deceived the world into thinking that the place you don’t want to go is the place of “*consuming fire*” and “*everlasting burnings*” which is God’s very presence. While unified in Christ you will be clothed with His fireproof “*robe of righteousness*” (Is. 61:10); for “*He will immerse [baptize] you with the Holy Spirit **and with fire.***” (Lk. 3:16). All sin that binds you will consume away and not a hair on your head will be singed. “*For you, God, tested us, to purify us like fine silver.*” (Ps. 66:10). Like Moses, let us remove all things that come between us and our Father of love (Ex. 3:5) and, with shining faces (34:29-35), stand unconsumed as “*the burning bush*” and grow in grace that we “*might be called **trees of righteousness**, the planting of Jehovah, that He might be glorified.*” (Is. 61:3).



God's light [truth] exposes everything that is hidden – that is judgment. **For those who choose to come to His light willingly, the light is healing and restorative. Yet to those who resist and hate the light, it appears threatening and terrifying.** This is what we need to understand while reading Scripture – an appreciation of the true character of God according to Jesus' revelation of Him ... “The sky was removed like a scroll when it is rolled up. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places ... They [the unrepentant] told the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb** [Jesus], for the great day of his wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:12-17). Note the reactions of all who have rejected the truth about God, embracing instead lies that He is two-faced as Satan has insisted. When Jesus returns again, all who have rejected the truth that God is love and light alone and has no dark side, are left with the only other option available, that God is in fact like Satan claims He is like. **Believing such lies though, always produces reactions of terror** as we are [mistakenly] sure about what this vengeful God will do to all who resist conformity to His demands. **It is such lies about God that are behind all fear**, and this is why it is crucial that we receive a love of the truth, so that we may have boldness in judgment instead of terror when encountering a loving, gentle Lamb [Jesus]. Terror of an innocent Lamb is the epitome of mental illness, which is exactly what sin causes. ~ Floyd Phillips (Knox, Indiana, USA)

At the time of writing this book Australia is in shock concerning the sickening murder of Brisbane native Hannah Clarke and her children. The husband of Hannah Clarke stated regularly that he loved his family. But when his wife did not do what he wanted and left him after years of control and manipulation, his jealous love caused him to soak his family with gasoline and burn them all to death as punishment. It is beyond comprehension, an unspeakable horrific crime for a father to burn his family to death. And yet this is exactly what has been taught concerning our heavenly Father in churches all over the world.

In the highly praised sermon entitled, *Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) says: “The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear you in his sight; you are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes as the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours.” In another sermon Edwards warns:

“... the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture. Imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven ... how would your hearts sink if you knew that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That **after millions and millions of ages your torment would be no nearer to an end, and that you never, never should be delivered. But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents.**”

John Whitaker (1783-1866) described hellfire saying: “The bodies of the damned will all be salted with fire, so tempered and prepared as to burn the more fiercely, and yet never consume.” And Johan Gerhard (1582-1637) taught: “... the Blessed will see their friends and relations among the damned as often as they like but without the least of compassion.” Then from Richard Baxter (1615-1691) we read:

“It is not a terrible thing to a wretched soul, when it shall lie roaring perpetually [eternally] in the flames of hell, and **the God of mercy himself shall laugh at them** ... God shall mock them instead of relieving them; when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and **he shall rejoice over them in their calamity.**”

How sad to believe such things

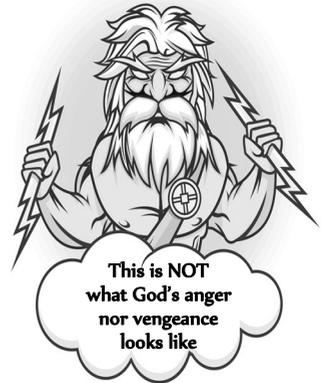
With that said, how do you read the following:

*“Do not take revenge dear friends, but give place unto wrath, For it is written, **‘Vengeance is mine. I will repay, declares Jehovah.’**”*

~ Romans 12:19 ~

5. “Vengeance is Mine!” says the LORD

Our system of justice, judgment, wrath and vengeance is a reflection of Satan’s kingdom of sin and darkness. God’s justice, judgment, wrath and vengeance reflects His kingdom of light and righteousness. Our way of vengeance is revenge upon “the bad guy” by inflicting some sort of punishment as can be seen in the many violent action movies such as the hit movie “Taken.” In this movie the daughter of Bryan Mills (played by Liam Neeson) has been kidnapped. While leaving a phone message to the kidnappers Mills says: “I don’t know who you are. I don’t know what you want. If you’re looking for ransom, I can tell you I don’t have money ... but what I do have are a very particular set of skills. Skills I have acquired over a very long career. Skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that will be the end of it—I will not look for you, I will not pursue you ... but if you don’t, I will look for you, I will find you ... and I will kill you.”



God’s vengeance however, is consuming all the sin—the self-serving “bad guy”—from us and restoring us back together with Him. Paul called this “bad guy” our “old man”, or our old self-serving ways:

*“Knowing this: that **our old man is crucified with Him** [Jesus], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

~ Romans 6:6.

Turning us away from serving sin is how God gets His vengeance upon the ungodliNESS and unrighteousNESS of man. By consuming all sin from our practice He will turn us from foe to friend. This is how God “gets even” with Satan (the one asking for ransom)—He will pay the ransom of death and rescue us from the enemy’s grasp. In an article on *characterofgod.org* Floyd Phillips writes:

“Vengeance takes on a larger dimension than just wrath which simply involves letting go of those rejecting God’s protection in their lives. **Vengeance includes God’s version of justice – which is always restorative, not punitive.** Thus vengeance in a strange way is how, at least in our jargon, God ‘gets even’ with His enemies – **by reversing all the curses brought into our lives by sin and selfishness.** Through God’s justice/righteousness **He gets vengeance, either by winning over His enemies and transforming them into friends, or reluctantly letting go of those persistently refusing His offers of love, grace and mercy to the effects of their choices.**

This does not mean He changes who He is inside; He never does that. What it means is that when there is no further possibility left inside us to respond to His kindness, in respect of our freedom of choice He withdraws His protection from our life because our choices have demanded it. **To do otherwise would be to impose His will on us,** which in reality would only destroy our ability to respond to His love. ... **God will never settle for anything less than friendship based on love through appreciation of His beauty of character.** It is impossible to foster friendship when there is threat of retaliation should one choose to withdraw. **True love requires complete freedom to reject it without any threat of punishment should one choose to do so.** This is at the very core of the nature of God’s government.

... **God’s vengeance then, is when His reputation is vindicated as light exposes all the lies about Him and are completely discredited and debunked.** This is God’s judgment. All the lies insinuating that God has a dark side, that God has to resort to violence, threats, fear, intimidation or even deception in order to overcome the power of evil – all must be exposed as fraudulent and baseless. All the slander against God’s reputation must be seen clearly for what it really is so that trust in God and His ways can be forever established without any lingering fear to contaminate it. ... Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head. Don’t be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.’ (Romans 12:20-21). **When evil is at last completely annihilated with good, God’s vengeance will be accomplished.** Only as we are willing to embrace the startling truth that Jesus is the exclusive revelation of God and His ways, and that **God is no more violent or threatening or retaliating than was Jesus when He lived here on earth** — only then can we begin to see with

*“Love is strong as death ...
the coals thereof are coals
of fire, which has a most
vehement flame.”*
~ Song of Songs 8:6

new eyes and perceive with our hearts, that **the way God gets vengeance and destroys His enemies is by what comes out of His mouth.** And when God speaks, what comes out of His mouth is what is in His heart, which is LOVE and only LOVE.”

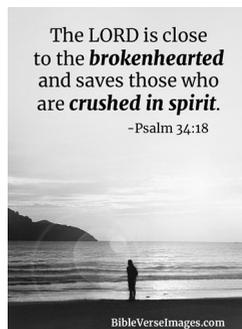
Notice how Isaiah defines God’s vengeance revealed in the Messiah:

*“The Spirit of Jehovah is upon Me, because Jehovah has anointed Me; He has sent Me to **bring good news to the oppressed and to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners; to proclaim the year of Jehovah’s favor, the day of VENGEANCE of our God; to comfort all who mourn.**”*

~ Isaiah 61:1-2. (see also, Luke 4:16-21).

God’s vengeance is:

- Bringing good news (the gospel) to the oppressed.
- Healing the brokenhearted.
- Proclaiming freedom for the captives to sin.
- Releasing prisoners from darkness (confusion/ Satan’s lies).
- Comforting all who mourn.



Can you see God’s vengeance in the following:

*“Therefore Jehovah of Armies, the Mighty One of Israel, says: ‘Ah, I will get relief from My adversaries, and **avenge Myself of My enemies**; and I will turn My hand on you, **thoroughly PURGE away your dross, and will take away all your tin [impurities]. I will RESTORE your judges [those with righteous discernment] as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning.**”*

~ Isaiah 1:24-26.

Satan has the whole world deceived that it is our Father of love who does all the killing of His enemies. Most see God's vengeance as God's anger coming to a boiling point, His patience runs out, and He let's them all have it by burning them alive in fire as they scream in pain and agony in endless torture. But, **if God really wanted to torture sinners He would force them to live in His kingdom; for the kingdom of God would be torture to all those who love sin.**

When Jesus entered the village of the Samaritans on His way to Jerusalem, the Samaritans rejected anything to do with Him. As a result of this James (Jacob) and John spoke up and said, *"Do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?" (Lk. 9:54).* They are referring to the incident recorded in 1 Kings 18 when, after fire comes down from heaven, Elijah slew all the prophets of Baal with the sword; and 2 Kings chapters 1 and 2 when Elijah calls down fire from heaven to consume his enemies. But notice Jesus' reaction to His disciples' question, *"But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man [the Messiah] has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' And they went to another village."* (Vs. 55).

Why does it seem it was okay for Elijah to do this, but not the disciples? Or, is the rebuke from Jesus to His disciples revealing their misunderstanding of the old story of Elijah? Could it be that Elijah, whom James (Jacob) says, *"was a man subject to like passions as we are" (Jas. 5:17),* was displaying the wrong spirit against his enemies as well? After all, Elijah did feel the guilt of using the sword and violence:

"But he [Elijah] went a day's journey into the wilderness. He went and sat down under a shrub and prayed that he might die: 'I've had enough! Now O Jehovah, take my life. After all, I am no better than my ancestors.'"

~ 1 Kings 19:4.

A little later God dealt with Elijah's zeal:

*"And He [God] said [to Elijah], 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah.' And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind ripped the mountains, and the rocks broke in pieces before Jehovah; but **Jehovah was not in the wind**: and after the wind an earthquake; but **Jehovah was not in the earthquake**: And after the earthquake a fire; but **Jehovah was not in the fire**: and after the fire a still small voice." ~ 1 Kings 19:11-12.*

During all the calamities of war, strife, winds, earthquakes, and fire God is the "still small voice" calling out to His people. He is NOT the cause of these things although our insurance companies call such disasters as "Acts of God." God has His angels "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." (Rev. 7:1). Another angel is heard saying to the four angels, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." (Vs. 3). It won't be God's angels who do the hurting. The hurting comes by the winds (strife) after they let go as Satan knows that every person on the earth will soon make their final choice between life or death.

*"Bind up the testimony, seal the Law [My character] among My disciples."
~ Isaiah 8:16*

Why must we be sealed? "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17). No one will be able to stand who has willingly crucified Christ afresh from their midst (Heb. 6:4-6). This is why there is an apparent delay in His coming; for He "is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish**, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ez. 33:1).

By the Word of Their Testimony

The words love and forgiveness carry different meanings for different people. I was brought up believing that God is Love (1 John 4:8,9). However, mingled with this belief was the teaching that God will destroy the wicked at the end with unquenchable fire. Even though I never connected the two thoughts in my head as a young person it had a deep impact in the way I dealt with others. It never occurred to me that I would have to redefine the word Love to accommodate mass extermination. To call this act an act of love would require an instantaneous destruction with no pain as is often used to provide an analogy (I was told it was like doing the humane thing to an injured animal). None of this was at the cognitive level but in reflection upon my past, it caused me to see that my patience with others was limited for others just as the patience of God, in my mind, had a limit for the wicked. I have come to learn many beautiful truths about the love and forgiveness of God, particularly that there is absolutely no limit to His patience, mercy or love. He is respectful of the freedom which every soul has and, if He is pushed away, He will not retaliate but allow the errant child to embark on a journey they have chosen, all the while remaining present to redeem them if possible. This has so changed my relationships with others as I offer to others what my God offers me every day, namely love and forgiveness with unchanging patience, and this has brought great peace to my life.

~ Ruben Olschewski (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)

There is another giver out there. Not a giver of life, but a giver of death. One who warps our understanding of Scripture which reveals the Father's love. In Ex. 12:12 we read: *"I [God] will pass through the land of Egypt that night and strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I'll execute judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am Jehovah."* How do you read this? A surface glance seems to reveal God is a destructive, angry, and abusive Father. However, let us now look at verse 23:

*"Jehovah will pass through to strike down the Egyptians, and when He sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, He will pass over the doorway, and won't allow **the destroyer** to enter your houses to strike you down."*

God is not the one doing the destroying. He's the One protecting His people from "the destroyer."

Paul counsels us to *"Neither murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer."* (1 Cor. 10:10). Here Paul is referring to the time when **serpents** came and began to poison the people of Israel as they were wandering through the wilderness on their way to the promised land (see, Num. 21). The Greek word for "destroyer" here is ὀλοθρευτής (*olothreutés*) which means "**venomous serpent.**" Again, who is this "destroyer"? In Numbers 21:6 it says, *"And Jehovah sent **fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died."* Why is this implying that Jehovah is the one who "sent" the serpents? Are the Destroyer and Jehovah working together? Never.

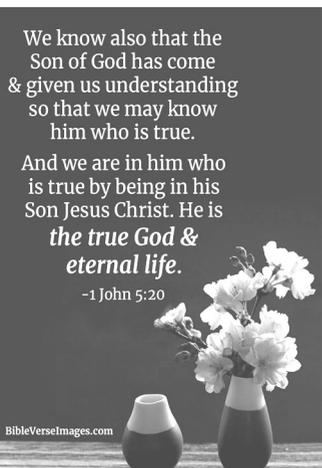
*"Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for **what partnership is there between righteousness and unrighteousness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?** ... Therefore come out from their midst, and be separate, says Jehovah, and touch no unclean thing, and I will welcome you." ~ 2 Corinthians 6:14,17.*

In Deuteronomy 8:15 we read that God led the people of Israel *"through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water."* God was protecting them from the serpents that were already there. He did not gather up a band of serpents like a pied piper and lead them to destroy the people. The people murmured against God revealing their unbelief in His protective care (Deut. 29:2-5). This grieved our Father, and, *by their own choice*, they made a breach in God's protective hedge/Law. By stepping out from underneath His protective hand it opened the way for the serpents to bite because *"Whoever breaks a hedge, a serpent will bite him."* (Eccl. 10:8). The same goes for those who rejected His protection at their doorposts in Exodus 12. They had spiritually crucified Christ, *"the **Firstborn** of all creation"* (Col. 1:15) meaning He is the One by whom God created all things (Vss. 16-17).

John tells us that Christ was, not only crucified in Jerusalem, but was “spiritually” crucified in “Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11:8). Thus their rejection of Christ (the **Firstborn** of all creation) backfired upon them and opened the way for the destructive evil angel to enter and kill all their **firstborn** sons. Yes, man “*becomes the victim of his own destructive plans.*” (Is.7:16).

*“[By the absence of His presence] He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble—a discharge [a letting loose] of **evil angels.**” ~ Psalm 78:49. (Words in brackets my own).*

Revelation 9:11 speaks of “*the angel of the bottomless pit*” calling him “*Abaddon*” and “*Apollyon.*” This name means “Destroyer.” In verse one it says this angel is he whom had fallen “*from heaven to the earth*” and was given “*the key to the bottomless pit.*” Clearly this angel is the fallen angel known as “*that old **serpent**, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*” (Rev. 12:9). It is Satan who is the source of all destruction. Remember, Peter solemnly warned: “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Pet. 5:8). And Jesus (the express image of the Father) said: “*The Son of man [the Messiah] did **not come to destroy** men’s lives, but to save them.” (Lk. 9:56). And then again says:*



“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”

~ John 10:10-11 ~

Jesus said the very last days will be like as it was in the days of Noah just before the Flood (Lk. 17:26). In Genesis chapter 6 we read, “*And God saw that the **wickedness of man was great** in the earth, and that every imagination of the*

thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... **The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.**" (Vss. 5,11-12). Notice that, because of the corruption of man, the earth *itself* is also corrupt and full of violence. Sin had affected all man, beast, air, and land (see, Rom. 8:22). "The earth is defiled by its inhabitants, for they transgress Torah [Laws] and changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant." (Is. 24:5). Hosea brings out this principle by saying: "Because they sow the wind, they will reap a hurricane." (Hos. 8:7). The earth itself being corrupt and full of violence was the cause of the violent Flood that came as it reflected man's iniquity back onto them:

*"And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity upon it [He allows the effects of sin to play out], and **the land itself vomits out her inhabitants**. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations ... **So that the land does not vomit you out also**, when you defile it, **as it vomited out the nations that were before you.**"*

~ Leviticus 18:25-28. (Words in brackets my own).

During the time of the Flood God had "visited the iniquity" upon the corrupt earth. Due to the speedy rate of man rejecting His Spirit, God, in His foreknowledge, warned of an impending Flood that would result in 120 year's time (Gen. 6:3). Through Noah, God's Holy Spirit pleaded for 120 years for the people to repent and get onto the ark. Peter says Jesus suffered the cross-like death during the days of Noah as the people rejected and **drowned out** the promptings of His loving and forgiving Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18-20). Just as the angry mob cried out, "crucify Him!" 1,000's of years later, those living during the Flood rejected life by saying, "depart from us!" (see again, Job 22:15-17). As a result, did God get so angry that He took vengeance on them all by coming down and killing them? Is that what righteousness is? No. Scripture is clear that "**Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate righteousness shall be desolate.**" (Ps. 34:21). They destroyed themselves:

*“The righteousness of the blameless directs their path, but **the wicked fall by their own wickedness**. The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but **the faithless are trapped by their own desires** ... A kind man benefits himself, but **a cruel man brings trouble on himself** ... Genuine righteousness leads to life, but **the pursuit of evil brings death** ... One gives freely, yet gains even more; **another withholds what is right, only to become poor** ... He who searches out good finds favor, but **evil will come to him who seeks it**. **He who trusts in his riches will fall**, but the righteous will thrive like foliage. **He who brings trouble on his house will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.**” ~ Proverbs 11:5,6,17,19,24,27-29.*

Mercy is justice because mercy is the right thing to do

By the Word of Their Testimony

What is God’s justice? Isaiah 30:18: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that **he may be gracious unto you**, and therefore will he be exalted, that **he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment**: blessed are all they that wait for him.” It is to be kind to his children and to have compassion on them. Ezekiel 45:9: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: **remove violence and spoil**, and **execute judgment and justice**, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD.” Once again, God’s justice here is to make things right by stopping the violence, not by executing violence on others. The injustice is to rob, cheat, and mistreat people. “Justice” then is to begin treating people in the right way, to treat people the way God would treat people. **To “bring justice” in the Old Testament does not mean to bring punishment, but to bring healing and reconciliation.** Justice means to make things right by correcting injustice. Justice then is ultimately an expression of mercy. It is mercy in action. This mercy in action is described in Proverbs as a path that we are to follow. It is a way of life. Proverbs 8:20: “I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment.” Proverbs 2:8-9: “He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.” **What is the path of justice? It is to make things right through compassionate intervention in the world.** ~ Adam Pearce (Sydney, New South Wales, Australia)

Many are confused at the love of God when they read such commands to His people to “destroy” the inhabitants of other lands including women and children. Some try to defend this by saying the people who are killed must be cut off like a cancer to save His people. But this would mean God is willing that some should perish when we have learned just the opposite (see, 2 Pet. 3:9). The command to “Go destroy” is a reflection of our hearts and character. God is exposing the sins of His professed people just as much as exposing the unbeliever’s. He’s allowing sin to destroy sin.

“So the Bible shows in several places God commanding things to man that man desires. Consider another example. ‘And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.’ Numbers 13:1-2.

Reading this text in the immediate context it appears that God desired Israel to spy out the land of Canaan. But when we read in a wider context we see something different. ‘And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.’ Deuteronomy 1:22.

It was Israel that wanted to spy out the land so God commanded them to do what they wanted. Why does God do this? ‘Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.’ Rom 5:20.

When a person has sin in their heart the first work of God is to show the person their sin. The human heart has the capacity to deceive itself. It is blind to its own sinfulness. When we are outside of the desires of God, He will command the things that we desire in order for them to grow and that we might begin to see why they are sinful. But He does not do these things without the opportunity for the person to know that these things are wrong. The commands are interpreted by men to mean God desires them because men are blinded to their own sinfulness. They also choose to believe this because then it makes God look like them and this justifies their sinfulness.” (Pastor Adrian Ebens, *Cross Examined & Cross Encountered*, pp. 27-28).

God's Vengeance:

*"I will heal your
backslidings."*

~Jeremiah 3:22

In Psalm 50:16-21 God makes a list of evil deeds that men do to others and then says, "But I kept silent, so you assumed I was like you." Fallen man assumes God acts like them and treats His enemies with hate, evil, and destruction. God says, He "kept silent" meaning He is always mercifully bearing our

iniquities. Instead of man believing we are created in God's holy/selfless image and likeness (Gen. 1:26), we turn that around to create a god in our unholy/selfish image and likeness. The Psalmist wrote: "To the pure You appear pure, but to the crooked You appear perverse." (Ps. 18:26).

Jesus said, "I and My Father are in complete unity" (Jn. 10:30); and 700 years before the birth of the Messiah Isaiah spoke of Jesus saying, "He had done no violence." (Is. 53:9). Unlike Satan, who is full of violence (Ez. 28:16), there is no violence in our Father of love. And John says to live Christ-like is to "do violence to no man." (Lk. 3:14).

Those who have the mind of Christ will see God's great mercy and love because God is Christ-like, but to those who have an unconverted mind of God's ways He will appear corrupt because He will appear to be like them. It is like when, in John 12:28-29, the Father spoke to His Son and some thought it "thundered" while others said, "An angel spoke to Him." (See also, Dan. 10:5-7). This was the case at Mount Sinai. The people feared hearing the thunder while Moses went up to listen to the still small voice. And such will be the case at the end. Most will run in fear experiencing an earthquake, hearing thunder, and seeing lightning and fire (Joel 2:1-10). But those whose life is hid in their Savior will proclaim:

*"Lo, this is our God; **we have waited for Him**, and He will save us: This is Jehovah; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." ~ Isaiah 25:9.*

But we must ask, what then is “*the fear of the LORD*”?

*“The angel of Jehovah encamps round about them **that fear Him**, and delivers them.” ~ Psalm 34:7.*

Since “*perfect love casts out fear*” why are we to fear God? Let’s let the Psalmist continue his thought as we begin to define what it means to truly “fear” God:

*“O taste and see that Jehovah is GOOD: blessed is the man that **trusts** in Him. O fear Jehovah, you His set-apart ones: for **there is no lack to them that fear Him.**” ~ Verses 8-10.*

Righteous fear in God is putting all your trust in Him. The Psalmist continues:

*“Come, you children, listen to me; let me teach you **the fear of Jehovah**. Who is the man that **desires life**, who desires many days, in order to see **good**? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. **Turn away from evil** and do GOOD, **Seek peace** and pursue it.” ~ Verses 11-14.*

To “fear God” is to “turn away from evil.”

*“**The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil.** Pride, arrogance, an evil lifestyle, and perverted speech I despise.” ~ Proverbs 8:13.*

Transforming the sinful heart and mind of men to truly “*hate [oppose] evil*”, drawing all sympathy away from the devil, sin, and a life of self-pleasing, is God’s vengeance. Fearing God is to place all your trust (faith) in Him because you have tasted and “*see that Jehovah is GOOD.*”¹

¹ In the KJV of Matt. 10:28 we read the words of Jesus: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The assumption by many is that God is the “him” to be feared “which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” However, the word “him” is not found in the Greek manuscript at all and the word “which” should be “things which” such as it is in Matt. 15:18, 20; 22:21. It should be rendered, “fear those things [sinful pleasures] which are able to destroy both body and soul in hell.”

When we are truly converted we will desire Him out of unselfish love and not because we fear any so-called punishment or desire some reward.¹ We will revere our heavenly Father so much that we fear to hurt *Him* and we don't want to ever let *Him* down. Through the Spirit of Jesus living in and through you, you will declare with Him: *"I do nothing from myself ... the Father has not left me alone; for I always do those things that please Him."* (Jn. 8:29).

"And to man He said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding."
~ Job 28:28

Once God is cleared to apply His forgiveness He will lead us in *"the way of everlasting."* His love will draw us to the point that, if we have done iniquity, we *"will do no more."* This cleansing from all unrighteousness, empowering us to live like Him, will bring glory to our Father of love and clear His name from the false accusations instigated by the "father of lies." The vindication of His character is the end-result of His judgment. In these last days we are to be proclaiming *"the everlasting gospel"* of God's love to all the world (Rev. 14:6) saying: *"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come."* (Rev. 14:7). It is now time for "His" judgment in which He (God) will be found "just" and "clear."

"Wash me completely from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You [God], and You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight; so that You might be just [justified] when You speak, and be clear when You judge."

~ Psalm 51:3-4.

¹ In Matt. 25:46 Jesus says: "These [the wicked] shall go off into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life." What is the "punishment" for the wicked? The Greek word for "punishment" here is *κόλασις (kolasis)* which carries the meaning of "deprivation." They will be deprived of life. They will "go off into everlasting deprivation of life." This is why they never receive true "rest" (Rev. 14:11) because they have rejected the presence of God (Ex. 33:14; Matt. 11:28-29) who is the ONLY source of life. Take a closer look at what Jesus says; while the wicked will go into "everlasting punishment [deprivation of life]", the righteous will go into "everlasting life." Only those who are in Christ receive everlasting life (1 Cor. 15:51-55). The wicked will receive everlasting death, not everlasting torture.

Follow the Hebraic Parallelism

1.

*“And **I will overthrow** the throne of kingdoms, and **I will destroy** the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and **I will overthrow** the chariots, and those that ride them; and the horses and their riders shall come ...”*

~ Haggai 2:22^a

How will God do all this?

*... every one by **the sword of his own brother.**” ~ Verse 22^b*

2.

*“Jehovah revealed Himself; He accomplished **justice** ...” ~ Psalm 9:16^a*

How did God accomplish justice?

*“The nations fell into the pit they had made; their feet were caught in the net they had hidden ... **the wicked were ensnared by their own actions.**” ~ Verses 15,16^b*

3.

*“I will thank Jehovah for His **justice** ...” ~ Psalm 7:17*

What is God’s justice?

*“See the one who is pregnant with wickedness, who conceives destructive plans, and gives birth to harmful lies—he digs a pit and then falls into the hole he has made. **He becomes the victim of his own destructive plans and the violence he intended for others falls on his own head.**” ~ Verses 14-16*

So which will you choose? Will you choose to cling to your self-condemning sins and hide yourself from the Lamb, disbelieving in His everlasting love and mercy? Or will you acknowledge your sins for the detestable things that they are, allowing Him to put sin to death by cleansing you from all unrighteousness and empowering you, by His indwelling Spirit, to **follow the Lamb wherever He goes**” (Rev. 14:4)?

6. Behold the Lamb of God!

As John the Immerser (baptist) stood in the waters of the Jordan River he told his listeners:

“I immerse with water, but there stands One among you, whom you do not know. He’s the One coming after me whose sandal straps I am not worthy to untie’ ... the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.’” ~ John 1:26-27,29.

This no doubt drew their attention to all the lambs that have been slaughtered on their altars throughout thousands of years. Some may have even remembered what Isaiah foretold concerning the coming Messiah: *“ ... He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” (Is. 53:7).* Later Peter wrote of Jesus:

*“... Christ also suffered for you and left an example for you to follow in His steps. He never sinned, neither was guile [deceit/lies] found in His mouth. **When He was insulted, He did not retaliate. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but submitted Himself to Him that judges righteously. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to those sins and live righteously ...” ~ 1 Peter 2:21-23.***

In every slaughter-offering there was a shadow of what Jesus, *“the Lamb of God”* would do for us (cf. Ex. 12:5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). But this Lamb was different. This Lamb would *“take away the sin of the world”* by bearing those sins *“in His body on the tree, so **that we might die to those sins and live righteously.**”* You see, Paul taught:

*“For the Law, being only a reflection of the blessings to come and not their substance, **can never make perfect those who come near by the same sacrifices repeatedly offered year after year.** Otherwise, would they not have*

stopped offering them, because the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer be aware of any sins? Instead, **through those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats [animal offerings] to take away sins.**" ~ Hebrews 10:1-5.

After this Paul brings out a truth that is truly amazing:

"For this reason, the Scriptures say, when Christ was about to come into the world: 'You [God] did not want sacrifices and offerings, but you prepared a body for Me [Jesus]. In burnt offerings and sin offerings You never took delight.' Then I said, 'See, I have come to do Your will, O God. In the volume of the scroll this is written about Me.' In this passage He says, 'You never wanted or took delight in sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings, and sin offerings,' which are offered according to the Law. Then He says, 'See, I have come to do your will.' He takes away the first [sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings, and sin offerings] in order to establish the second [God's will]; for by God's will we have been sanctified once and for all through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ." ~ Hebrews 10:5-10.

Did you catch what that is saying? It is saying that animal slaughter-offerings were NEVER "God's will." Paul is teaching what was already written by David in Psalm 40:6-8 where it clearly says, "You [God] did not require burnt offerings and sin offerings." (Vs. 6). He has NEVER taken delight nor even required the killing of any of His creatures.

*"For I did not speak unto your ancestors, nor commanded them in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices."
~ Jeremiah 7:22*

" 'How do your multitude of sacrifices benefit Me?' says Jehovah. 'I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts. I don't enjoy the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. When you come to present yourselves in My presence, who has required you to trample on My courts?' "

~ Isaiah 1:11-12.

God continues to plead for His people to understand that His ways are not about violence or killings. He warned: *“When you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood!” (Is. 1:15)*. Mankind has offered *“multitude of sacrifices”* and *“many prayers”* seeking to appease God so He will acknowledge us and forgive us. But He does not require nor hear such things. He is not a God that needs to be appeased; for He freely gives His everlasting mercy. What He desires for us is our sanctification, but most people only desire forgiveness and have no desire to live the sanctified life, all the while not realizing that God’s forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. Forgiveness is more than the forgiveness OF sin, but the reclaiming FROM sin. Notice how Isaiah continues his thought:

“Wash yourselves, and make yourselves clean; remove your evil behavior from My presence; stop practicing what is evil. Learn to practice what is good; seek justice, alleviate oppression, defend orphans, and plead for the widow.¹ Please come, and let’s reason together,” implores Jehovah. *‘Even though your sins are like scarlet, they’ll be white like snow. Though they’re like crimson, they’ll become like wool.’” ~ Isaiah 1:16-18.*

“Justification/pardon marks a change in us about right thinking, and about the kind of person God is. It’s not that of God relinquishing a grudge He’s been holding against us, or falsifying the record books in heaven, as many seem to see it.”
~ Laurence Aschcraft

We need not go about our daily routine thinking God will never accept us. This is far from the issue. God has already accepted you, not merely before you were born, but even before Adam, the first man, was ever created. The issue isn’t if God will accept you, but if you will accept Him. *“We love Him, because He first loved us.” (1 Jn. 4:19).*

¹ Notice God’s kind of justice here: *“alleviate oppression, defend orphans, and plead for the widow.”*

“Many human beings have been educated to think that prayer is offered in an effort to change God’s mind or attitude toward the sinner, informing the infinite God of something that He does not already know, or persuading Him to grant some blessing which He was previously unwilling to give ... **Men have been taught to beg the Lord for mercy and forgiveness rather than to claim these blessings as the promises of a merciful and pardoning Father.** The Lord is approached with an attitude of uncertainty as to whether or not He would be willing to grant the heartfelt needs of the humble, repentant soul. Such is not the character of God. He is eager to bless and quick to forgive, not willing that any should perish, but desiring all to come to repentance [2 Peter 3:9]. ‘For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee’ (Psalm 86:5).” (Ty Gibson, *The Path of the Just*, p. 61).

So, now the question is, since God takes no delight nor requires the blood of an animal for Him to forgive us, why then did He institute the whole sacrificial system? As we seek to answer this all important question we must remember that we have previously learned that many times throughout Scripture we see God commanding things that we require and desire. Could it be that it was *us* who required animal offerings in order for *us* to be satisfied in *our* mind that God has forgiven us?

“Is it requisite again to remind the reader that the Scriptures repeatedly represent God as doing what, in the course of his providence, he only permits or suffers to be done?”
~ Adam Clarke

At the Last Supper, the night before His death, Jesus explained to His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him (Jn. 13:21). After Peter questions Jesus as to whom this might be Jesus replied:

*“He is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then He took a piece of bread, dipped it, and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After he [Judas] had taken the piece of bread, **Satan entered him.** Then Jesus told him, ‘Do quickly what you [Judas/Satan] are going to do!’” ~ Verses 26-27.*

The whole work of shedding the blood of the Son of God was the work of Satan and God permitted this by delivering up His Son for us all (Rom. 8:32), as can be seen by the act of Jesus giving Judas the piece of bread, which represents our Savior's body that has been given for us (Lk. 22:19). Jesus told Pilate: " ... *For this reason I came into the world—to testify to the truth [concerning the Father's character] and everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.*" (Jn. 18:37). Earlier, while Jesus was praying to His Father He said:

*"And this is eternal life, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth; I **have finished the work which You had given Me to do** ... I have made Your name [character] known unto them, and will continue to make it known [through His Spirit in us], so that the love You have for Me may be in them and I Myself may be in them."* ~ John 17:4,26.

Jesus had finished the work His Father had given Him to do the night *before* His death. All His life He had bore witness to the truth by glorifying (fully revealing) His *Father's character* so that the world might know Him. Hours later, while on the cross, Jesus cried out, "*It is finished*" and then died (Jn. 19:30). What was finished? The full revelation of *Satan's character* as God allowed man and Satan to carry out the horrible work of killing His beloved Son. The night of His arrest Jesus told His accusers, "*This is **your** hour, and the power of darkness [Satan and his kingdom].*" (Lk. 22:52-53).

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "*we did esteem [wrongly perceived] Him [Jesus] stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for [or, by] our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.*" (Is. 53:4-5). Many are taught that God's justice means someone must die as a punishment for their sins. We have seen, however, that it is sin itself that declares the death of the sinner, not God. The false gospel teaches God is full of anger and needs to punish the guilty with His fiery wrath. Jesus then steps in and

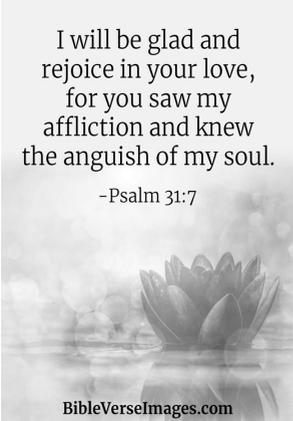
pleads with the Father to forgive those who are guilty and unleash His wrath upon Him instead. But Isaiah just informed us that it was NOT God who killed His own Son to appease any wrath, but that He gave His Son to the world to testify of His sacrificial love by not retaliating, and keeping silent as a lamb, while being bruised and wounded and murdered by *our* iniquitous principles of justice. Jesus revealed the true character of Satan's kingdom. Paul says that, by *“disarming the [accusing] rulers and authorities [of darkness; Eph. 6:12], He [Jesus] has made a public display of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Col. 2:15).*

It is our sin (our satanic belief that God would not forgive us unless some type of penal atonement was made) that brought the death of the Son of God in order for us to finally believe we can have forgiveness and remission of sins. God, who unselfishly took the risk of eternal separation from His Son, delivered Him up for us **to satisfy our own concept of justice** which demanded *“without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22).*

The concept of sacrificing (offering) up someone, or something else to excuse our own sin originated with man when Adam and Eve cast the blame onto each other and ultimately upon the Son of God

Just meditate on that thought for a moment. This should cause you to rethink everything you thought you knew concerning the cross. The literal definition of the word forgiveness is “to release a debt.” **If God had set the ransom price of death and needed to punish Jesus in order to forgive us and appease His wrath, He would have gotten paid and didn't really forgive anything.** But the truth is, the cross doesn't *achieve* God's forgiveness, it *displays* His everlasting forgiveness. In other words, God did not forgive us *because* Jesus died on the cross, the Messiah dying on the cross reveals that God had already forgiven us *“while we were still sinners”* and *“when we were enemies”* with Him.

And what does this truth do to the believer? It draws us to Him. His loving-kindness, in releasing our debt without anything we have done to deserve it, draws us; for *“the kindness and love of God our Savior has appeared toward all man, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His MERCY He saved us ...”* (Titus 3:4-5).



I will be glad and
rejoice in your love,
for you saw my
affliction and knew
the anguish of my soul.

-Psalm 31:7

BibleVerseImages.com

“God does not need to be reconciled to man, for, like the mother’s love, His love ever follows us, even when we are in the downward way, seeking to bring us back to Him. But man needs to be reconciled to God. In some way there must be an atonement made. Not that God’s wrath must be satisfied, so that He will look with favor upon offending man, but that God’s love must be so manifest, in spite of the existence of suffering and sin, that men will turn their hearts toward Him, as the flower toward the sun ... The word ‘atonement’ means at-one-ment. Sin had brought misery, and misery had brought a misunderstanding of God’s character. Thus men had come to hate God instead of loving Him; and hating Him, the one Father, men also hated man, their brother. Thus, instead of the one family and the one Father, men were separated from God and from each other, and held apart by hatred and selfishness. There must be an atonement ... The atonement is not to appease God’s wrath so that man dare come to Him but it is to reveal His love so that they will come to Him.” (George Fifeield, *God Is Love*, pp. 46,48).¹

We have been *“reconciled to God through the death of His Son.”* (Rom. 5:10). Not that this death appeased an angry God in order for Him to finally accept and forgive us, but through that death we will finally believe in the everlasting-love and mercy of a Creator willing to die for His wayward creation, thus putting to death any preconceived thought that man, at any time throughout history, had to offer some form of appeasement offering.

¹ Download the book, *God Is Love*, for free at maranathamedia.com. (See advertisement page at the end of this book).

By the Word of Their Testimony

After the Fall man no longer believed that God would forgive him. If he did, Adam or Eve would have humbly accepted God's forgiveness. They didn't, instead they appeased (or shifted the guilt, two sides of the same coin) - "the woman that You gave me, it is her fault." Man now has a mind that believes that God must punish something, even though that is not how God is. Man is deceived by Satan to think that God is a wrathful killer, sin has warped their thinking. God cannot just tell them He forgives them. Man won't believe Him. So He accommodates their thinking to open up their mind to a place where they can think about the work the Son of God will do to allow them to believe in forgiveness. Thus God institutes a sacrificial system, not because He needs it but because man needs it. Through that ritual Abel is able to understand Grace and obedience and mercy and the suffering of Christ (how fully, we don't know), but Cain rejects this lesson and takes Satan's way which is the way of self and what "I think" is right according to "my own understanding."

~ Danutasn Brown (Bangkok, Thailand, Asia)

Through the death of Jesus, our appeasement-minded thoughts would be reconciled with His righteous-merciful thoughts who never wanted or desired animal offerings. By the renewing of our mind, we will declare "there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:18) because the offering of Jesus would "purge your conscience from [these] dead works [animal offerings] so that we may serve the living God [His way]." (Heb. 9:13-14).

*"For You do not desire sacrifices; else would I give it: You do not delight in burnt offerings. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart,** O God, You will not despise."* ~ Psalm 51:16-17.

The Psalmist continues: "Show favor to Zion in Your good pleasure; and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will be pleased with pure sacrifices, with burnt offerings, and with whole burnt offerings. Then they will offer bulls on your altar." (Vss. 18-19).

This does not mean that God will one day be pleased with animal offerings. No. He will be pleased with the indwelling sacrificial-lifestyle they represent in the believer. The setting here is after the rebuilding of *“the walls of Jerusalem.”* Daniel prophesied that the Messiah would arrive 69 prophetic weeks after the decree to *“restore and rebuild Jerusalem ... the street shall be built again, and **the wall**, even in troublous times.”* (Dan. 9:25). After this the Messiah would *“confirm [strengthen] the covenant with many for one week [cf. Matt. 26:27-28; Rom. 15:8] and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”* from our mindset (Vs. 27). It is because of our Savior’s sacrifice when David’s words, *“Then You will be pleased with pure sacrifices”*, will come to pass. Are bloody slaughter-offerings of literal “bulls” what God calls “pure sacrifices”? Not ever! *“The sacrifices of God are a broken [submissive] spirit.”*

The prophet Hosea says:

*“Take words with you, and return to Jehovah. Say to Him, ‘Completely forgive our iniquity and receive us graciously that we may offer **the praise of the sacrificial bulls of our lips.**”* ~ Hosea 14:2.

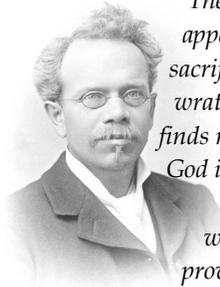
Paul expounds on this verse in Heb. 13:15 saying, *“Through Him [Jesus] let us continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, **the fruit of our lips**, giving thanks to His name [merciful character].”* Peter says, since *“you have tasted that the Lord is good”*, you will *“offer **spiritual sacrifices** that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* (1 Pet. 2:3-5).

*“I therefore urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercies, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices** that are holy and pleasing to God, for **this is the reasonable way for you to worship.**”* ~ Romans 12:1.

In Hosea 6:6 we read: *“For I desired **mercy**, and not sacrifice; and the **knowledge of God** more than burnt offerings.”* Notice again the Hebraic parallelism: Mercy = knowledge of God; Sacrifice = burnt offerings. Jesus

expounds on this concept: *“But if you had known what this means: ‘I desire **mercy**, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”* (Matt. 12:7). Condemning and judging others is to excuse ourselves while sacrificing (murdering) them in our place.

*“With what should I enter Jehovah’s presence? With what should I bow before the sovereign God? Should I enter His presence with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Will Jehovah accept a thousand rams, or ten thousand streams of olive oil? Should I give Him my firstborn child as payment for my rebellion, my offspring, my own flesh and blood, for my sin? **He has told you, O man, what is good, and what Jehovah really wants from you: He wants you to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God.**” ~ Micah 6:6-8.*



“The idea of propitiation or sacrifice is that there is wrath to be appeased. But take particular notice that it is we who require the sacrifice, and not God. He provides the sacrifice. The idea that God’s wrath has to be propitiated in order that we may have forgiveness finds no warrant in the Bible. It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with men that He will not forgive them unless some thing is provided to appease His wrath ... The heathen idea, which is too often held by professed Christians, is that men must provide a sacrifice to appease the wrath of their god ... But note the love of God. ‘But God commendeth [demonstrated] His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ [Rom. 5:8] ... Some say they cannot accept Christ because they are not worthy ... That is true. They are not worthy. None of us are worthy ... Why did He die? To make us worthy; to make us complete in Him.” ~ E. J. Waggoner (1855-1916)

Through God's permissive will animal sacrifices were permitted to show Adam how depraved he was in his thinking. Satan had set the ransom price and the only way Adam could be emancipated from this thinking was through the act of shedding that innocent blood by his own hand. But all that Adam really needed to do was believe in God’s everlasting mercy by confessing his sin, receiving God’s forgiveness and permitting God to cleanse him from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). However, because the

“Does Jehovah take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices?

Or does He find pleasure when people obey Him?

Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice, and listening is better than the fat of rams.”

~ 1 Samuel 15:22

satanic belief that we could not be forgiven unless some form of appeasement be made was so far implanted in our minds, the only way the Son of God could convince us that we could be forgiven was to condescend to meet our understanding by dying and paying the ransom price “that through death He might destroy him having the power of death— that is, the devil.” (Heb. 2:14; Young’s

Literal Translation). How is he destroyed? Jesus will take away sacrificing (condemning) others in our place, and establish righteousness and mercy (God’s way of judgment/justice):

“ ... For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that **He might destroy the works of the devil** ... This is how God’s children and the devil’s children are distinguished. **Any person who fails to practice righteousness by not loving his brother is not from God.** This is the message that you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. **Do not be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother.** And why did he murder him? Because **his works were evil** and his brother’s works were righteous. So do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love one another. The person who does not love his brother abides in death. **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** We have come to know love by this: that Jesus laid down His life for us; thus we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s possessions and sees his brother in need and yet withholds his compassion, how can the love of God be present in him? My little children, we must stop expressing love merely by our words and manner of speech; we must love also in action and in truth ... And this is His commandment: to believe in the name [merciful character] of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another ...” ~ 1 John 3:8,10-18,23.

An example of God’s mercy is also found in Jesus’ acts of healing the sick. Let’s read Matthew 9:2-7:

*“And, behold! They were bringing a paralytic lying on a cot to Him. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed one, ‘Be comforted, child. **Your sins are forgiven.**’ And, behold, some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This One blasphemes.’ And seeing their thoughts, Jesus said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For what is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man [the Messiah] has authority on earth to forgive sins ...’ He said to the paralytic, ‘Rise up, lift up your cot and go to your house.’ And rising up, he went away to his house.”*

Did the sick man ask and beg to be forgiven? No. And yet Jesus tells him, *“Your sins are forgiven.”* Jesus saw the faith of the sick man’s friends who accepted (had faith in) the forgiveness which He already had for the whole human race. **They knew that if they found Jesus they would find no condemnation—only forgiveness and healing.**

“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.” ~ Psalm 103:10-11.

The sick man was already in the state of having been forgiven even *before* he came to Jesus. And notice this point as well — **he was already in the state of having been forgiven even before Jesus died on the cross.** Otherwise He would have said, *“Your sins will be forgiven.”*

*“Then, Peter drew near to Him and said, ‘My Master, how many times should I forgive my brother with me who is at fault. Should I forgive him up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, until seven times, but rather until seventy times seven. That is why the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he had begun to settle the accounts, a person who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him. Because he couldn’t pay, his master ordered him, his wife, his children, and everything that he owned to be sold so that payment could be made. Then the servant fell down and bowed low before him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything!’ **Then the master of that servant was filled with compassion and released him, and forgave him the debt.**” ~ Matthew 18:21-27.*

Here we see a person who owed money to the king, but could not pay it back. After the person and his family were sentenced to be sold, he falls on his knees begging, *“Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything!”* Knowing this person could never repay this debt, the king was *“filled with compassion”* and *“forgave him the debt.”* What does this have to do with us? Jesus said right at the beginning that this story is likened to *“the kingdom of heaven.”* This story is about God’s character toward us. Because of sin we were in a debt we could not pay, but God forgave us this debt. Paul says:

*“But now the righteousness [spirit of mercy] of God without the Law [without any merited works] is manifested [revealed] ... which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory [character] of God; **Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” ~ Romans 3:1:21-24.*

We cannot pay off our own debt with good works nor with any type of appeasement sacrifice. Did the servant in the story ask the king for forgiveness? No. He asked for more *time* so he could pay off the debt: *“Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything!”* Do we need to beg the true King for forgiveness, or start trying to be good (pay Him back), in order for Him to let go of any grudge He has so He will forgive us? No, the true King holds no grudges and is eternally *“filled with compassion”* — *“For God so **LOVED** the world”* — He *“forgave [us] the debt.”*

The story Jesus told did not, however, have a happy ending. He told how the forgiven servant *“went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ ” (Matt. 18:28).* After the man begged for his life saying, *“Be patient with me, and I will repay you”*, he was denied and thrown into prison (Vss. 29-30). The king found out about this and summoned the one he forgave and said, *“You evil*

servant! I forgave your entire debt for you ... Should you not show mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed you?" (Vss. 32-33). As a result the king "delivered him over to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due unto him." (Vs. 34). Then Jesus concludes: "Likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if each of you do not forgive your brother from the heart." (Vs. 35).¹

By the Word of Their Testimony

During the last week of October I went through my accounts of my little business that I run from home (I am a math tutor to high school students, or teenagers). I noticed that one client was in arrears on about half a year of payments. I had to address the matter. Instead of sending out multiple harassing emails demanding payment, I decided to take the non-violent route, a route of mercy. I contacted her about the outstanding amount and made her the offer to take her child on as a non-paying child in my class for 2020. I asked her how much of the outstanding balance she could afford to pay and to indicate to me the period over which she can pay it off. She replied to my message on the same day, apologizing about the outstanding amount. She told me that her husband had been unemployed and that he recently found employment again, but never received his first salary (which was at the end of August). She undertook to pay the full amount by the end of December. Psalm 118:8: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

~ Nina Snyman (Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)

The Scriptures say, *"For the one who has shown no mercy will be judged without mercy ..."* (Jas. 2:13). When we ask for God's forgiveness we are asking that we be made devoid of man's sinful form of justice so that our Father's righteous system of justice be imparted *in* us in order to be reflected *through* us. However, if condemning and judging without mercy is

¹ Notice again God is not the one causing the torment directly, but the "tormentors" who are "released" or waiting for the one who steps out from under the hedge.

what you believe a good system of justice is, then please remember, “He will render [give] everyone according to what that person has done.” (Rom. 2:6). You will receive according to the way you have judged others and you will have no excuse nor complaint about it. He will accept your own verdict against yourself and will declare that this sentence is just. Our own sentence will mirror back the quality of forgiveness we have shown to others: “forgive us our debts **AS** [just like] we forgive those who are in debt to us.” (Matt. 6:12). Jesus explained how the judgmental heart works:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee [religious leader] and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: ‘God I thank you that I am not like other people: extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’ The tax collector, however, stood afar off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner that I am!’ I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” ~ Luke 18:10-14.

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, “Father, glorify Me with Yourself.” Then verse 22: “The glory [character] which You have given Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one.” The glory (righteous character) that our Messiah gives to us is *Himself* filled with the glory of the Father. We will be filled with His unconditional tender loving kindness toward others because, those who “follow the Lamb [Jesus] wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:4), will have “His [Jesus’] Father’s name [character] written in their foreheads [minds].” (Vs. 1).

*“These words I am commanding you today must be kept in mind, and you must teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up. You should tie them as a reminder on your forearm and **fasten them as symbols on your forehead.**” ~ Deuteronomy 6:4-8 ~ (See also, Prov. 7:1-3; Is. 8:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; Rev. 7:1-3).*

The narrative of the cross over the centuries is God's forgiveness for our sins. Yet, the horrendous wresting of scripture has turned the cross of Christ into Satan's mockery. Atheists, Muslims, Buddhists, spiritualists are appalled by a religious culture that glorifies child sacrifice for appeasement. They are dumbfounded at the folks who worship this god who commits wanton genocide and call these 'acts of love'. In their misguided zeal they warn people to turn away from sin and run to this same god who will destroy them if they refuse his offer of mercy today. Is this really the story of the cross? **God never required the beating, humiliation and gruesome torture of His precious Son ... we did!** Sin had so blinded us that we viewed God as one who is watching and waiting for an opportune time to destroy us. We lived in constant fear and threat of death. **Yet God, understanding the veil over our hearts and our spiritual blindness consented to our demonic construct of justice - and died on Calvary.** The pure and holy One allowed us to manifest the evil of our hearts upon Him, and He resisted not. Is. 53:6-7. This revelation leads us into a process of an ever-deepening repentance. Purging the dregs of error; making way for the implanting of truth and light.

What if we considered ourselves to be so fallen, so bereft of understanding anything correctly (about God), that **God in His great love for us accommodates our understanding of justice and provides the perfect illustration to demonstrate our faulty thinking?** The desire of Satan to kill Christ was successful, but in this revelation of hatred, God is able to manifest His love for us. In the converted heart, we see that we all are guilty of nailing Jesus to the cross. Rightly understood, the cross is the beginning of our self-revelation as it probes deeply into our ideology about how we view God and how we view ourselves. It reveals the deceitfulness of our hearts as we once believed God required the death of His Son to appease His own wrath. It strips away the lie that we cannot live holy and blameless lives, as the path Jesus trod is the very same He has bidden us to follow. As our world rapidly submerses itself into nihilism, violence and confusion, let us grasp the arm of the Infinite and impart a light of Glory into this world that will turn the hearts back to God; bringing reconciliation and the promise of eternal life for all those hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

~ Anna Pace (Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada)

At this time some may be asking, “But didn’t God command the punishment of stoning against those who broke His Law such as the Sabbath and adultery?”

*“When the Israelites were in the wilderness they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to the whole community. They put him in custody, because there was no clear instruction about what should be done to him. Then Jehovah said to Moses, **‘The man must surely be put to death; the whole community must stone him with stones outside the camp.’** So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as Jehovah commanded Moses.” ~ Numbers 15:32-36.*

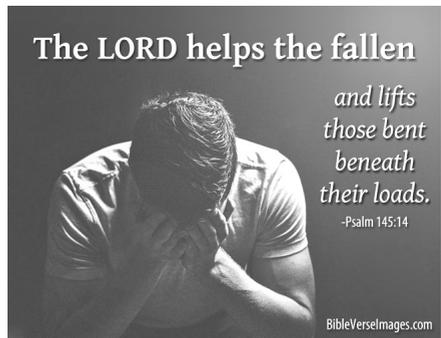
As you may recall, during the time of the Exodus God had given Moses two tablets of stone engraved with the Ten Commandments. Both the tablets and the writing was the work of God. A little later Moses, in an angry rage against the Israelites, threw these tablets down breaking them. As a result God told Moses to make a new set of tablets and He would write on them what He had written on the first set. As a result we now have a set of tablets made by Moses (man) and writing from God. This is to show that the Law (instructions) have two purposes working like a mirror which would reflect both divine attributes and fallen humanity’s attributes. It represents the Old Covenant mindset of man trying to perform the works of God instead of allowing God to do His work within us.

Like a mirror the Torah (Law) not only reveals God’s character but also fallen man’s. Paul said, *“I would not have known sin except through the Law.”* (Rom. 7:7), because *“sin, seizing the opportunity through the Commandment, produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. For apart from the Law, sin is dead.”* (Vs. 8). And then concluded, *“So I found that the very Commandment that was intended to bring life brought death!”* (Vs. 10). We have seen that throughout the Old Testament God commanded things that fallen man desired. He does this because He will not interfere with man’s

freedom of choice and to allow sin to abound (Rom. 5:20), or, as Paul also says, “ ... *that through the Commandment sin would become utterly sinful.*” (Rom. 7:13).

Instead of condemning and judging the man who was gathering wood upon the Sabbath the Israelites should have gone to him and inquired about his reasoning as to why he was doing this. Then, if found to be in disobedience to God’s design, instruct him in the ways of God to bring reconciliation. But because they had the condemning mindset they, like the Pharisee against the tax collector, puffed themselves up, and God gave them over to their *own desires* according to their own perverted view of justice. This would cause their own sin of self-righteousness to abound and then hopefully they repent seeking their own reconciliation.

Just remember how Jesus, our perfect example, responds to the same scenario in Jn. 8:2-19. Instead of the leaders bringing to Him a Sabbath breaker they bring to Him a woman accused of adultery. They do this in order to try and trap Jesus on matters of the Torah (Vs. 6). However, He exposes (magnifies) their own sins by writing in the dust (cf. Jer. 17:13) and commands, “*Let the person among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.*” This complies with Deut. 17:7 which says, “*Let the witnesses be the first to begin the execution.*” Unlike the Israelites of old, these Pharisees were convicted of sin and chose not to condemn and stone the woman, and then Jesus, displaying His Father’s character, says to her, “*Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.*” This is the same outcome God was seeking when the accusers picked up stones to kill the Sabbath breaker. Jesus was not abolishing the instruction against adultery but was bringing out the true intent of the statute of stoning.



In an article on *theblaze.com* entitled, *fact-check: does the bible really condone stoning?*, they asked Rabbi Aryeh Spero concerning this statute:

“... When it comes to perceived Biblical mandates or issues like stoning, the rabbi noted that **it’s important to view the holy book through a specific lens.** ‘It is our duty to, with reverence and humility, demarcate between that which God intended as eternal and that which was a time-period-necessity later to be eased-out—animal sacrifices, for example ... Things regarding human nature and sexual discipline and limitations undoubtedly are eternal, as are the Sabbath and need for holiness. ... Certain procedures were never meant to be permanent and were, instead, based on the habits and mindsets of the original society that God spoke to. The culture, thus, had a major impact on how these procedures were implemented and played out.’”

The *mindset* of the Israelites concerning stoning during the time of Moses did not come from God, but from Egypt. Moses told Pharaoh: *“If we make sacrifices that are an abomination to the Egyptians right before their eyes, will **they not stone us?**”* (Ex. 8:25-26).

Later, the Israelites themselves, being brainwashed into this form of justice for 100’s of years while in slavery, desired to stone Moses:

*“... and the people murmured against Moses and said, ‘Why in the world did you bring us up out of Egypt – to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?’ Moses cried out to Jehovah, ‘What will I do with this people? – a little more and **they will stone me!**’”* ~ Exodus 17:3-4.

Just as Jesus spoke the minds of the disciples by calling the Canaanite woman a “gentile dog”, God was speaking their minds by commanding stoning in hopes that their eyes will be opened to such a horrific scene of punishment. God said, *“I gave them over to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live.”* (Ez. 20:25). Their sin of brutally condemning (sacrificing) others to excuse themselves would abound to the

point of reaching out and taking hold upon God's grace, receiving His forgiveness and walk in His mercy. They were to remember, *"the one who has shown no mercy will be judged without mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."* (Jas. 2:13). God had told them, *"I will surely do to you just as you have spoken in My hearing"* (Num. 14:28), which again shows the judgment that falls upon man will be the judgment that man decided for himself. God has said, *"When anyone from the house of Israel erects his idols in his own heart ... I Jehovah will answer him according to the multitude of his idols ..."* (Ez. 14:4-5). Unified in Christ we will love our neighbor as ourselves realizing that *"all have sinned, and fall short of the glory [character] of God."* (Rom. 3:23) and yet, *"while we were still helpless ... Christ died for the ungodly."* (Rom. 5:6).

**Let us all bear in mind that we are dealing with
souls that Christ has purchased with infinite cost to Himself**

Like Isaiah, the closer we come to Christ the more sinful we will appear in our own eyes and yet knowing that He will not condemn us; for His judgment is mercy. (Is. 6:5-7). Won't you live by our heavenly Father's standard? *"For you will be evaluated by the same standard as you evaluate others."* (Matt. 7:1-2). Most everyone today would agree that stoning is barbaric, but believing God will burn billions of people in endless torture is somehow an attribute of holiness and love.

My command is this:

***Love each other
as I have loved you.***

-John 15:12

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When we truly have the love of God abiding in us we will no longer hold grudges against those who hate and persecute us. Instead of seeking vengeance we will seek for their spiritual healing and salvation

by humbly praying for them; for we claim this promise:

***"You will be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy."* (Lev. 19:2).**

7. “Be Holy, for I am Holy.”

Scripture tells us that it is counter-active to the everlasting gospel to be trapped in the never-ending cycle of sinning and asking for forgiveness.

“Look, you’re trusting in deceptive words that cannot benefit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear by false gods, burn incense to Baal, follow other gods that you don’t know, and then come to stand before Me in this temple that is called by My name and say, ‘We’re delivered [forgiven], so we can continue to do all these things that are repugnant to God’? Has this temple that is called by My name become a den of violent ones in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, declares Jehovah.” ~ Jeremiah 7:8-11.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven – only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons and do many powerful deeds?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice Lawlessness [those who are hardened in selfishness].” ~ Matthew 7:21-23.

It depends on how far we swing the pendulum. Some people believe they can’t be forgiven while others believe that being forgiven is understood to mean they can live the way of sin and still live eternally. However, we have seen that the only life which is eternal is the life of *righteousness* and most people do not desire to live that way. The Apostle Paul refers to “*all Scripture*” as being “*given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness**: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped unto all good works.*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And that’s exactly the Hebrew concept of the *Torah*. It is not “law” as western “Gentiles” think of law, a list of arbitrary rules, but “the instruction manual” of the righteousness (character) of God which is to dwell in and reflect through us as it was in the beginning: “*Your Word have I hid in my heart **that I might not sin against You.**” (Ps. 119:11).*

In Romans 8:1-2 Paul wrote, when we finally understand that there is “no condemnation” for those who are in union with Jesus, we are set “free from the law of sin and death.” In verses 3-4 he says, since God’s Law (Torah) cannot force its righteousness to be fulfilled (displayed) in us, God sent “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” and, instead of condemning us, “He condemned sin in that flesh, so that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Then in verses 6-7 Paul teaches us why we need to be filled with God’s Spirit—His very own presence, attitude and life— by saying:

“For to be carnally minded [self-centered] is death; but to be spiritually minded [others-first] is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity [hostile/against] God: for it is not submissive to the Law [selfless standard/nature] of God, nor can it be.”

Without the Father’s Holy Spirit abiding in us it is IMPOSSIBLE to keep God’s Law. Forcing people, who do not have God’s abiding presence, to keep His Law of righteousness is useless. We can’t even force ourselves to do it. However, here is where most of Christianity makes a huge mistake. Instead of focusing upon the truth that “*the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us*” who walk in harmony with God’s Spirit, they say, “Since Jesus kept the Law perfectly, we don’t have to. He did it all for us, freeing us from ever having to keep that dreaded list of rules.” They will then point out the last portion of Romans 6:14: “*You are not under the Law, but under grace.*” However, when Paul says, “*You are not under the Law, but under grace*” he does not mean God’s grace abolishes the Law. His loving grace is, and always has been, the power (inspiration/motivation) to obey (submit to) God’s righteousness.

*“Through Him we have received **GRACE** and the office of discipleship, [why?] to bring about **FAITHFUL-OBEDIENCE** among all the nations on behalf of His name [character]; among whom you also are the called-ones of Jesus Christ.”*

~ Romans 1:5-6.

**World-view
Of God's Law**

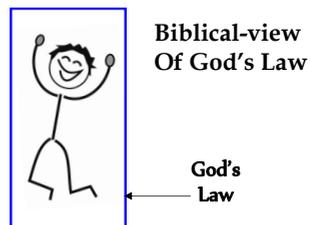


On his website, *characterofgod.org*, Ray Foucher points out that most of the world, including Bible believing Jews and Christians, consider God's Law (Torah) to be a set of rules that God has made for us humans to behave, and when we break His rules, He punishes us. Our motivation to behave, therefore, is for fear of punishment.

We fear getting "spanked" by our Father, who often gets angry and more abusive the more we misbehave even to the point of killing us. In this view "the gospel" is that Jesus came and kept the Law perfectly for us, but then suffered the legal consequences of being punished by God as a sinner releasing us from God's death decree for disobeying Him. We are now no longer to live by a strict set of rules, but under His grace (undeserved favor) to the point that some even assume God abolished His Law altogether.

However, we have seen that God's Law is not a list of arbitrary rules imposed on us in order to keep us in line. God's Law is His unchanging character of righteousness, and without God's presence (His Spirit) living within us it is impossible to even begin to live out this character. As Mr. Foucher says, "It's like trying to fit a round peg in a square hole."

The biblical view of God's Law is that His nature and character is a protective hedge by design upon which life operates rather than imposed rules which require imposed punishment. God's Law is designed to keep us safe from the real enemy and to heal and restore us from the natural consequences of stepping outside the hedge.



“He that despises his neighbor sins [steps out from within the hedge], but whoever is KIND to the needy, happy is he ... He that handles a matter wisely shall find GOOD: Whoever trusts in Jehovah, happy is he ... Happy is the man that always fears [hates and shuns evil/remains within the hedge]: but he that hardens his heart shall fall into mischief ... Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint [God’s protection]: but he that keeps the Torah [Law], happy is he.” ~ Proverbs 14:21; 16:20; 28:14; 29:18.

In an article on *comeandreason.com* entitled, *Penal Substitution versus Design Law—What’s the Difference?*, Dr. Timothy Jennings writes:

“Under imposed law models, there is nothing inherently wrong with breaking the law. Going 50-mph in a 45-mph zone doesn’t naturally result in any injury or harm to the violator of the law. The violator must be caught by the authorities, have their deeds recorded, their case presented before a judge, and then receive an arbitrarily determined penalty inflicted as punishment. This is human law, not Creator law. This is the way of sinful beings, not a sinless God. This idea of law is the basis of penal substitution theology. It is founded on a lie about God’s law and presents a view of God’s government that is functionally no different than sinful human governments.

In the penal view, God becomes the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death. It is taught, in the penal view, that God’s use of power to torture and kill is ‘justice,’ because sin must be punished. Such bad theology is the fruit of accepting Satan’s lie about God’s law and that God, in order to be just, must punish sin. In this view, rather than God working to heal and save the spiritually terminal, God becomes the one from whom we need to be protected, resulting in theologies that have, as their function, the sole purpose of hiding and protecting us from God, rather than heal us to be fit to live in His presence.

Consider the many ideas taught in Christianity that have, as their function, the purpose of hiding us from God. Why? Because people wrongly believe that if God saw their sin and their sinfulness, that He would be required to lash out with wrath and anger to inflict pain and suffering to punish them for their sin. This is exactly what Satan wants people to think, because this idea keeps people hiding themselves from God. But David of old prayed, ‘search me and

see the wicked way in me'. **He didn't want to hide his sinfulness from God, because he knew God wouldn't punish him, but was the only One who could heal him**, so he prayed, 'create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.'

God's end-time people are to present a message to the world that calls them back to worship the Designer, and to worship 'him who made the heavens, earth, sea and foundations of water.' (Rev. 14:7). This is a call to reject the dictator-views of God and embrace the Creator, Designer, and Builder of reality! This means we must reject imposed law and all the false penal legal theology upon which it is founded."

Not being "under the Law" means the *results* from breaking the Law (*death*) is no longer your motivation. Through the Son of God you are no longer under the "*fear of death*" — no longer under the false notion that God is going to kill you because you disobeyed Him, thus you rely solely on Him, and not some external law/rules, as the means to make you righteous.

*"Since the children [of God] partake in flesh and blood, He [Jesus] likewise partook of their humanity, that through death He might destroy him having the power of death—that is, the devil and **set free those who were held in bondage all their lives by their fear of death.**" ~ Hebrews 2:14-15.*

Clearly this divine system of justice cannot work in a world full of sinful minds that are "enmity against God" and incapable of submitting to His Law. Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world: **If it were, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.**" (Jn. 18:36).* Commenting on this John Gill says:

"If Christ's kingdom had been a worldly one, set up on worldly views, and governed with worldly policy, and was to answer some worldly ends, Christ would have had servants enough among the Jews, who would have declared for him, and took up arms in his favour against the Romans ... [however] it [Christ's kingdom] does not rise out of, nor proceed upon, nor is it supported by worldly principles, wherefore none of the above methods are made use of." (Gill's Bible Exposition).

Jesus had told His disciples why He spoke in parables to the people: *“Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are in parables.”* (Mk. 4:11). He later said, ***“The kingdom of God does not come by observation; neither will they say, ‘Lo here!’ or ‘Lo there!’ for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”*** (Lk. 17:21). How is it within us? Through Jesus’ very presence.

Worldly justice may take care of the symptoms of evil, but God’s justice cures the problem. The system of “an eye for an eye” will only make the whole world blind, not sinless. God did not speak of this concept in Exodus 21:24 as a prescription for justice, but more so of a limit upon the human application of it (like we saw in the incidents of Israel wanting a king, the quail, animal sacrifices and stoning — God commanding what man desires, but at times with limits).¹ Jesus, however, brings out God’s way for His followers to live by in our sphere of influence:

“You’ve heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist the evildoer, but whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well.” ~ Matthew 5:38-39.

Thus, because we, who have the kingdom of God within us, are *“strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (Heb. 11:13), we will *“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”* (Matt. 22:21). *“For unless a man be born again, he cannot see [truly understand and experience] the kingdom of God”* (Jn. 3:3) because *“you judge by human [worldly] standards, but I [Jesus] judge no one.”* (Jn. 8:15).

¹ This concept is also seen in the laws concerning clean and unclean creatures (see, Lev. 14; Deut. 11). In God’s original design nothing is to die and man’s diet is plant-based (Gen. 1:29), but because of the hardness of our hearts God permits what we desire and sets limits in order to lead us, step by step, back into harmony with His original design. Jesus said the same for divorce when He said, “but from the beginning it was not this way.” (Matt. 19:3-9). Statutes concerning Israel choosing warfare, polygamy and slavery etc. all fall into this category of accommodations (Ez. 20:25).

*“And **be not conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order that you may prove what the good and pleasing and perfect will of God is.” ~ Romans 12:2.*

“Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Far be it. On the contrary, we establish the Law ... What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under grace? Let it no be!”
~ Romans 3:31; 6:15

Jesus’ teaching in no way changes His Father’s instructions, but only magnifies the true intent (see, Is. 42:21; Matt. 5:17-20). He further explains this concept saying, *“In everything, treat others as you would want them to treat you, for this fulfills the Law and the Prophets.”* (Matt. 7:12). “An eye for an eye” therefore, is meant to deter us (the believer) from doing evil. God is saying, “If you

don’t want someone to poke out your eye then don’t poke out theirs.” And yes, as Jesus says, this is the intent of “the Law and the Prophets”:

*“Do not say, ‘I will pay back evil!’ Wait for Jehovah, so that He may vindicate you ... Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and when he stumbles do let your heart rejoice ... **Do not say, ‘I will do to him just as he has done to me;’ nor, ‘I will pay him back according to what he has done’** ... If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.”*

~ Proverbs 20:22; 24:17,29; 25:21.

Let us not think that unless those who have injured us confess their wrongs, we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness

*“Therefore, as **God’s representatives**, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. **Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.**” ~ Colossians 3:12-13.*

Do you want a change of your life's perspective? Well, observe with me how the term 'forgiveness' is being filled in with a wholly new content. When the Son of God, the One who is God's full Representative, was hanging on the cross and thus was at the point of the most shameful situation (Phil. 2:8), and when the perpetrators, our representatives, were challenging Him by saying: "Come now thou from the cross if thou are the Son of God", He uttered those words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." **He thus showed how far the Father's forgiveness extends and that the only barrier for it is found in our stubbornness and never in His character.** His burning desire to forgive His children was further expressed in the words uttered to the only one on Calvary who sought for mercy: "And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you today, you shall be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:42,43). Do you feel His yearning to forgive in this incident? Well, the penitent man who received this gift of forgiveness represents that small part of humanity who really believes that the Lord is always ready to show His mercy towards them, even at the point of death, because His mercy, unlike ours, endures forever.

~ Deyan Delchev (Ravno Pole, Sofiya, Bulgaria)

We have seen that the atonement is not that God's mind will become at-one with our mind, but that our mind will become at-one with His. It is *our* mind (our misunderstanding of God's character) that needs to be put to death. *"Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 2:5). **Our mind needs to be renewed to its original state before Adam's sin in order for us to even desire to please the Father His way.** The Greek word for "repent" is μετανοέω (metanoéo) which literally means, "to change (renew) one's mind"; therefore, since *"the kingdom of God has come near, repent [renew your mind] and believe the gospel [the good news of our Father's true character]"* (Mk. 1:15); for *"it is God's kindness [goodness] that leads you to repentance."* (Rom. 2:4).

When sin has run its course throughout all history of the kingdoms of the world (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Dan. 7:1-12), *“Then to Him [the Son of Man/Messiah/Jesus] is given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an **everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away, and **His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.**”* (Dan. 7:13-14).

“How come this power of the ‘Son of Man’ would never be destroyed by another power? The traditional interpretation has been that it is because God is omnipotent, therefore when He crushes all the world powers by His limitless compelling power, violence and force, there will be left no one to ever challenge God again. But is this what the principle of the sword teaches us about God’s government? A big no. God demonstrates through history that not even His omnipotent power could establish peace through force, violence and compelling power [otherwise He would have used it]. If He could [have used omnipotent power and force], then rebellion would not have occurred in the first place, and there would have been no need for God, man and angels to suffer all these heartaches for more than 6000 years.

Why does the kingdom of the ‘Son of Man’ last forever? This is it, **it operates on an opposite principle to all the powers that we have seen in history. He never uses the sword, force, nor compelling power [Lk. 22:49-51]. His is the ‘Sword of the Spirit’ – TRUTH, LOVE AND FREEDOM.** In this kingdom, the King and His ‘servants’ present the truth in love and leave people free to receive or reject it. **Instead of force, freedom; instead of killing His opponents, He dies in their place; instead of compelling His subjects to submit, He transforms and melts their hardened hearts by the revelation of His never changing love for them.** And for those who will never choose to be conformed to His image, He leaves free to ‘depart from His presence’ and to ‘Cry to the rocks and mountains to hide them’. However know that to depart from God [the only source of life] means death. ‘...Yes, woe to them when I depart from them!’ (Hosea 9:12).” (Emmanuel Eshun, *Law of the Sword, characterofgod.org*).

No more are we to serve God out of “*fear of death.*” Through the New Covenant mindset you move away from obeying a list of rules, as a mere obligation, to that of lovingly and selflessly receiving His gift of grace and repentance to live as God lives — Christ-like! You no longer serve Him as a lowly fearful servant, based upon performance, but because of your inheritance through Christ as sons and daughters of God created in His image and likeness.¹ “*The Law is holy, just and good*” (Rom. 7:12) because the great Lawgiver (Designer) is holy, just, and good, and when He lives within the converted mind and heart He promises, “*You will be holy; for I Jehovah God am holy.*” (Lev. 19:2).

“What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ... We know that our old man [old self-pleasing ego] was crucified with Him [Jesus] so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” ~ Romans 6:1-2,6.

By the power of His grace you will no longer transgress (profane) His name (character of love). You will *delight* in His love and be drawn by it. Ezra said, “*the joy of Jehovah is your strength.*” (Neh. 8:10). You will allow God to rewrite His Commandments, not upon tablets of stone, but “*upon the tablets of your heart*” (Prov. 7:3) and declare, “*I delight to do Your will, O my God: Yes, **Your Law is within my heart.***” (Ps. 40:8; Heb. 8:10).

When we are truly made free in Christ, we receive His power to be obedient —“*If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*” (Jn. 8:36). You shall be free INDEED. Your “deeds” (works) will be “at-one” with your freedom. To be free in Christ means we are promised perfect freedom from the Sin-master. We are no longer to be in bondage to the thought that we do not have a choice in the matter of sinning or not sinning. By the power of God’s grace “*sin [transgressing the Law] will not have dominion over you.*” (Rom. 6:14).

¹ For a study on how the two covenants are not two dispensations of time, but instead two mindsets request or download the book, *Faith Journey*. (See inside back cover).

We have always had a choice, but the enemy has beguiled us into thinking humans have no choice but to sin. God will never impose or intrude when we protest; for God does not control our minds without our consent. We are all free to choose what power we will have ruling over us *“either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness.”* (Rom. 6:14-18).

From His early childhood Jesus daily witnessed the loving grace that the Father bestowed upon Him. Luke writes of Jesus: *“And the Child grew, and became strong in spirit [character], filled with wisdom, and **the grace of God was upon Him.**”* (Lk. 2:40). Jesus’ ever growing love for His Father sealed Him so that He could not be moved. Paul says Jesus *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”* (Heb. 4:15). Although He was born *“in the likeness of sinful flesh”* as we are (Rom. 8:3^a), He never once chose to sin. He took upon Himself our sinful flesh, with all its tendencies toward sin, but resisted it at every breath and every thought. Just as we are *“partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise **took part of the same ...**”* (Heb. 2:14). Jesus said we will *“overcome **as** [just like] I overcame”* (Rev. 3:21). How did He overcome every temptation? By receiving God’s power of grace. *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and **find grace to help in time of need**”* (Heb. 4:16) — just as Christ did! We can, therefore, walk by faith (in confidence) knowing that *“the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, instructing us to renounce ungodly living and worldly passions so that WE might live sensible, honest, and godly lives **in this present age.**”* (Titus 2:11-12). What a hope! What a promise!

Grace + salvation = ceasing to sin “in this present age”

Remember the story we referred to earlier about the *“paralytic”* in Matthew 9:2-7? Not only did Jesus say, *“Your sins are forgiven”*, but He continued and said, *“Rise up and **WALK.**”* (Vs. 5). God’s forgiveness gave him the freedom to *“walk.”* We’ve also seen that on another occasion Jesus demonstrated His forgiveness on behalf of an accused adulterous woman.

After Jesus told the woman, “Neither do I condemn you” (Jn. 8:11^a), He then added, “Go, and sin no more” (Vs. 11^b). **God’s mercy/justice gave her the freedom/healing from the bondage/condemnation of Satan to “go, and sin no more.”** “And take not the Word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I await Your justice, so that I may always **keep Your Law [Torah]** continually forever and ever, and **walk about in freedom**. For I have sought Your precepts.” (Ps.119:43-45).

This is, in fact, what 1 John 1:9 reveals: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just [justified] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Notice this forgiveness is pointing forward — He is just “to forgive.” This is unlike the word “forgiven” (past tense) found in Colossians 2:13 which says, “And you, who were once dead in your sins ... He has granted to live with Him, **having forgiven** you all your sins.” This verse is pointing to the past (something already accomplished) while 1 John 1:9 is pointing forward (or, something going on even now).

The Greek word for “forgiven” in Colossians 2:13 is χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*) which means, “pardon, to graciously remit a person’s sins.” The word for “forgive” in 1 John 1:9 however, is the word, ἀφίημι (*aphiēmi*) which means, “put away, separate us from.” We find this exact same word found in Matthew 13:36 which says, “Then sending away [*aphiēmi*] the crowds, Jesus came into the house...” We also find it in 1 Corinthians 7:11: where it is translated as “put away” in the King James Version in the sense of “divorce.” What 1 John 1:9 actually says is: “If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and justified to SEND AWAY [*aphiēmi*] our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is a forgiveness that is received by the already forgiven sinner. He will grant us a full “divorce” from the practice of sinning as we continue to faithfully receive His everlasting forgiveness.¹

¹ For a more detailed look at these two words for “forgiveness” see the book, *Biblical Forgiveness—Are There Two Types?* (See advertisement page at the end of this book).

When Satan brings to mind a sin, attempting to cause you to doubt in God's forgiveness, magnifying self-condemnation, just remember that he will only remind you of a sin that you have confessed and been forgiven of. He would never bring to your mind a sin that you have no recollection of. Why? Because he knows you would confess it at once and be cleansed of it. God, on the other hand, brings to your mind a present sin, not to condemn you, but because you have asked Him to in order that you may acknowledge it, confess it, and be cleansed of it.

By the Word of Their Testimony

In the New Testament Jesus speaks of a sin that cannot be forgiven. Luke 12:10: "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." How can it be that all sins spoken against Christ can be forgiven but those that blaspheme the Holy Spirit can't be forgiven? Jesus speaks to our conscience through the Holy Spirit and in this way brings the conviction of truth into our minds. Our Saviour is reaching out to us and offering us mercy through the conviction of His Spirit. When we reject the promptings of the Spirit we have no more avenues to accept the forgiveness of God through Jesus. The unpardonable sin is man refusing to accept the mercy of God. It is man that decides his sin is unpardonable; for God's mercy is everlasting. Psalms 100:5. Yet when men reject the truth and sin to the point where they can't believe those sins can be forgiven then it is impossible for men to be forgiven. They have decided it themselves and God is unable to change their minds. God did not demand death as a penalty of sin; death is the sure result of believing that God will not forgive. ~ Pastor Adrian Ebens (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia)

Paul tells us that, "*in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.*" (Col. 2:9). He then prayed that ...

*"He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory [character traits], to be strengthened with might by His Spirit [life/presence] in the inner man; that **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**, that you, being*

*rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height [of His love] so you will know [experience] the love of Christ, which passes all knowledge, **that you might be filled with all the fullness [character traits] of God.***

~ Ephesians 3:16-19.

Just as Jesus was born in sinful flesh with a divine nature (*“filled with all the fullness of God”*), we, while in that same sinful flesh, may be born again and become *“partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* (2 Pet. 1:4).

What the Father did in and through His only begotten Son He will do in all those who submit and die to self. We will live on this earth in complete union with Him allowing Him to lay our glory in the dust and permit Him to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves

This is true righteousness by faith. We will *“keep the Commandments of God”* by keeping (securing) *“the faith of Jesus.”* (Rev. 14:12). We will live *“by the faith of the Son of God”* while *“in the flesh”* because Jesus’ faith is a *“faith that works by love.”* (Gal. 2:20; 5:6). His faith must become ours. It is true that we cannot demonstrate God’s Law (His character) in our own strength, but Jesus came and lived in our humanity, and by His perfect obedience/submissiveness **He proved that humanity, when combined with divinity, can and will obey every one of God’s precepts.** We don’t become divine, we “partake” of it. *“The Law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing life to the soul.”* (Ps. 19:7).

In Revelation 14:6-7 an angel having *“the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth”* says, *“Fear God and give glory to Him.”* In Revelation 18:1-4 we see the results of this everlasting gospel when another *“angel comes down from heaven, having great power; and the earth is lightened with his glory.”* These angels (messengers) represent a great movement upon the earth as the message of “the everlasting gospel” is given in “great power” by His people. The glory of this last angel lightens the

whole earth. This glory comes from our Father as His true character is finally heard and seen in the words and lives of His people. This is the work we are to finish in these last days. Just as *“God was revealed in the flesh”* through His Son (1 Tim. 3:16), He will be revealed in the flesh through His church (people); *“so that the life also of Jesus might be revealed in our mortal flesh.”* (2 Cor. 4:11). Paul wrote that ...

*“The purpose of this enlightenment is that, **through the church**, the multifaceted wisdom of God should be made known [not only to those who inhabit this earth, but] to the rulers and the authorities in heavenly places.”*

~ Ephesians 3:10.

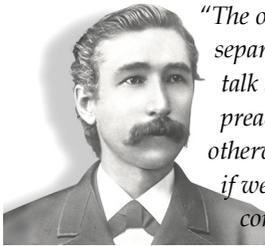
God’s character will be vindicated before the whole universe “through the church”—those who do not resist His love. Paul calls this manifestation of God in the flesh *“the mystery of godliness [holiness/righteousness]”* (1 Tim. 3:16) when God will reveal *“the riches [character traits] of the glory of this mystery ... which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**”* (Col. 1:27).

*“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom **the god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.** For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ is the One who shined in our hearts to give us **the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ.**”* ~ 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

This work will be completed by Jesus as we allow Him to come in and search our hearts and minds, exposing our sins, so that we can confess them at once and receive His forgiveness in order to be cleansed from all unrighteousness; for *“He which has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Phil. 1:6). Yes dear brothers and sisters, the death and resurrection of Jesus did not finish the whole plan of redemption. Although His death and resurrection seals the victory of our redemption, there is more work for our heavenly High Priest to do in us. Paul wrote:

“He [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” (Heb. 7:25); “For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His [present] life!” (Rom. 5:10).

Jesus still to this day lives in perfect harmony with the righteousness of His Father as revealed in the Law (Torah) and, as He is permitted to live in your heart, it is His present holy life in you that makes you righteous



“The only true preparation for the coming of the Lord is separation from sin. It makes no difference how much we talk about the coming of the Lord; nor how much we preach the signs of the times; nor how much we prepare otherwise, though we sell all we have, and give to the poor, – if we are not separating from sin, making it our constant consideration to be absolutely separated from sin, and to be servants of righteousness unto holiness, we are not making preparation for the coming of the Lord at all ... if our constant consideration is not entire separation from sin, our profession is a fraud.” ~ A.T. Jones (1850-1923)

With Jesus living in and through us we will do the same work that the Father sent Him to do. We will make known His name (true character). We are to be true witnesses of God, our Father of love. Some may profess to be “Christians” but their lifestyle proves they are only representatives of Satan, the father of lies. Accepting Jesus as your Savior for self-purpose reasons is not it. Trying to “be good” in order to help God in His decision to accept you, as if He were some sort of Santa Claus who only gives the “good children” good gifts and the “bad children” a block of coal, is a false gospel. Living selfishly, while claiming Jesus lives in you, presents Him as a selfish being, and since He is filled with all the fullness of God, then we are presenting our heavenly Father as a selfish being. This is Satan’s goal, and

by living and teaching this way we strengthen his case against God. Most people today are opposed to the concept of “commands” and rightly so, since Satan has likened the Ten Commandments of God with commands of tyrannical leaders throughout history—Obey me or I will torture you! However, the Hebrew word for “commands” here is דָּבָר (*dabar*) — “words”, in the context of “promises” — “You have My word.”

By the Word of Their Testimony

Here are other examples of the same grammatical construction which are clearly promises and not commands: “And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: **thou shalt not die.**” (Jud. 6:23). “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; **thou shalt not die.**” (2 Sam. 12:13). (See also, 2 Sam. 19:23, Jer. 34:4, Jer. 38:24). “**Thou shalt not** be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;” (Psa. 91:5). “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and **ye shall keep**, and do them.” (Eze. 36:27).

That last verse is the promise of God putting His Spirit within us which will bring with it the promise of His law within our hearts enabling us to keep all of His commandments. **The keeping of God’s law will then be NOT a matter of compulsion to be obedient (for fear of punishment) but it will be what we naturally want to do (for love of Him). The natural result of being filled with the Spirit of God is to keep His commandments.** “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12). God does not need His word so that He can read our hearts. The Bible is written in such a way that (rightly understood) it helps us to see our own hearts. This is sometimes referred to as the mirror principle.

~ Ray Foucher, (Greenwood, British Columbia, Canada)

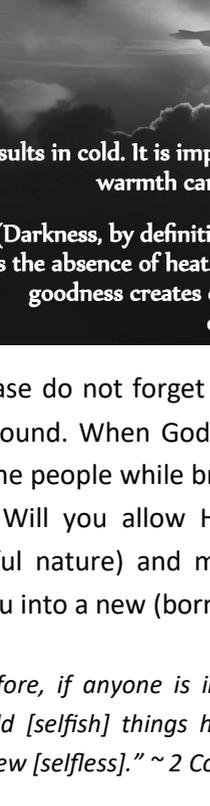
As you look through several of God’s Commands ask yourself why is He commanding these. For example: Why is stealing wrong? Is it because it makes people upset when you take their things they have worked hard to

afford? No, although that is a negative consequence to such an act. Stealing is morally wrong because God is not a thief and when you steal you present God as a thief. Why is adultery wrong? Not because it ruins marriages and families (which it does), but because God is always faithful and when you commit adultery you present God as an adulterer. Why is breaking the Sabbath wrong? Because God is the Source of our rest and His Appointed Times (Festivals) are designed as a channel to receive a magnification of His presence (Ex. 33:14; Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4); which alone makes us holy (Ez. 20:12,20). Why is coveting wrong? Because God is not a covetous Being.

Why are feeding the hungry, ministering to the poor in spirit, healing the sick, visiting the widows and orphans and helping the elderly cross the street morally good actions? Because “*God is love*” and this is how our Father of love eternally lives. When you read “*thou shalt not ...*” you are meant to read this as a promise. When the Father abides in you, through the Spirit of His Son, He promises “*You will not kill*” because God is not a killer.¹

¹ Some argue that the Hebrew word for “kill” (*ratsach*) in the Command “Thou shalt not kill” (KJV) should instead be translated as “murder” and thus the Command prohibits murder but not killing in many other situations such as self-defense, military duty or execution for a capital offence. However, in Deut. 4:42 and Num. 35:22-25, *ratsach* is used in the case of accidental killing (manslaughter). Would it make sense for God to Command: “Thou shalt not accidentally kill anyone”? The argument is that, if God meant all killing including self-defense, military duty or execution for a capital offence, then the Hebrew word *muwth* would have been used. However, there are examples of *muwth* being used in cases of premeditated, unjustified killing such as murder and assassination (1 Sam. 19:2). If *muwth* only meant killing for “righteous reasons” as many say, then Psalm 37:32 would be teaching that a wicked person could kill a righteous person for righteous reasons: “The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to kill [*muwth*] him.” But can a wicked person ever do anything righteous? And how about this question: If *ratsach* only means “murder” and is prohibited by God, why would God command the very opposite in Num. 35:30: “Whoever kills a person, the murderer [*ratsach*] shall be put to death [*ratsach*] by the mouth of witnesses ...” Is God saying it is justified for “the murderer” to be “murdered by the mouth of witnesses”? Adrian Ebens writes: “If God and His Son kill people then They have death in Their Spirit. If this were true death could never be destroyed and it would not be considered an enemy [1 Cor. 15:26] ... Christ does not simply *have* eternal life, He is eternal life. You can’t be eternal life and have death in your character at the same time, it is simply not possible!” (*Agape*, p. 131. Download *Agape* for free. See inside back cover).

“But wait!”, some astute Bible students will scream: “In Deut. 32:39 God Himself says, ‘I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal ...’” Others will say, “In Eccl. 3:3 it says there is ‘A time to kill, and a time to heal ...’” Ah yes, but have we not seen the blessings and curses which result in respect to God’s own presence?



“I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I Jehovah do all these things.” (Is. 45:7)

How could God be the one to “create darkness”? By withdrawing His light – His truth. How is God the creator of war or evil? By withdrawing His peace – His Presence.

The absence of light creates darkness like the absence of heat results in cold. It is impossible to make darkness or cold but light or warmth can be withdrawn and darkness and cold result.

(Darkness, by definition, is the absence of light; cold, by definition, is the absence of heat.) The absence of life is death. The absence of goodness creates evil. When the God of light, life and goodness departs, the result is darkness, death and evil.

And please do not forget that God’s presence is a consuming fire to sin wherever found. When God says “I kill, and I make alive” He’s not saying He kills some people while bringing others to life. He’s referring to the same individual. Will you allow Him to consume/kill/wound the sin (the “old man”—sinful nature) and make you alive/healed by His indwelling Spirit creating you into a new (born again) creature?

“Therefore, if anyone is in [one-with] Christ, he is a new creature [born again]. Old [selfish] things have passed away, and, behold, all things have become new [selfless].” ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Always remember that, while on this sin-sick earth, Jesus Himself was “despised and rejected by others, and a man of sorrows, intimately familiar with suffering; and like one whom **people hide their faces**; and we despised Him and did not value Him.” (Is. 53:3). God does not promise that you

will be without sorrow and suffering while on this earth. Jesus says He came, *“that [we] might have life, and that [we] might have it more abundantly.”* (Jn. 10:10). So, *“rejoice in the degree that **you are partakers in the sufferings of Christ**, so that when His glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad.”* (1 Pet. 4:13).

Remember, Job did not suffer tribulations because God was judging and punishing him for being a sinner nor will He do that to you. In the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus teaches that the one who sows tares (or, weeds/difficulties in life) upon the earth is *“an enemy.”* (Matt. 13:24-30).

Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer

*“No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: **He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear**, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.”*

~ 1 Corinthians 10:13

Dear friends, He has faith in you. Do you have faith in Him? *“My brothers and sisters, **consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials**, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything.”* (Jas. 1:2-3).

*“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; who for **the joy [you and I] that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Think of Him who endured such opposition against Himself by sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up ... besides we have experienced discipline from our earthly fathers and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life? For they disciplined us for a little while as seemed good to them, but He does so for our benefit, **that we may be partakers of His holiness.**” ~ Hebrews 12:2-3,9-10.*

It is by beholding Jesus that we partake of His holiness—the holiness of the Father. Jesus is the *complete* image of the Father. Not part, as if He were the light (peace and mercy) while the Father is darkness (vengeful and violent); for He is the perfect “way” to the correct understanding of our heavenly Father. Paul said Jesus “*is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” He is there as our High Priest, our “*Advocate with the Father.*” (1 Jn. 2:1), who is the ONLY “*Mediator between God and man.*” (1 Tim. 2:5). As we have seen, Jesus as our Advocate and Mediator does not mean that He and us are trying to get God to reconcile with us, but that He and the Father are working together to reconcile us to them. Jesus is our “Advocate along-with the Father.”¹

*“What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”
~ Romans 8:31*

The Lord is on my side;

I will not fear.

—Psalm 118:6



*“Sanctify them [make them holy] through Your truth: Your Word is truth ... That they may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, **that they also may be one in Us:** that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, **and have loved them,** as You have loved Me.” ~ John 17:17,21-23.*

¹ In fact, the Greek word for “advocate” here is παράκλητον (*parakletos*) which is the same word most-often translated as “Comforter” or “Helper” in Jn. 14:15-17,26 referring to the Holy Spirit. When Jesus says “another Comforter” He’s speaking grammatically *in* the third person and not *of* a third person. He is speaking of His very own presence as “the Spirit of truth” who will live in and through us! In verse 18 He continues saying, “I will not leave you comfortless: *I will come to you.*” Then in verse 23: “If anyone loves Me, he will obey My word, and My Father will love Him, and *We will come* unto him and make Our home within him.” The Holy Spirit of the Father, through Jesus, is our “Advocate”; our “Comforter”; our “Helper”—“The Spirit [abiding presence] of truth” in us which will make us holy—selfless like Him! (see also, Ps. 51:11; 139:7; Jn. 15:4-5; Gal. 4:6-7).

By the Word of Their Testimony

In my journey to knowing the ever merciful and loving character of our Father one thing has stood out for me, that is, how the Agape love of the Father begets the Faith of Jesus. As the Father gives all things to His Son, the Son submits to the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God. John 3:35; Galatians 5:6; John 6:57; Romans 12:2. The Son lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God and says AMEN to everything the Father says, because He knows that in God there is no darkness at all. Mathew 4:4; Revelation 3:14; Mathew 11:27; 1John 1:5. Therefore the Son delights to do His Father's will, the law of God is within His heart, and He lives to reveal the glory (character) of His Father. Psalm 40:8,9; John 17:4-6. This same process occurs in us. Christ reveals to us the love of God, and if we accept that revelation, the faith of Jesus will be formed within us. Then we shall live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God, hoping only to reveal our Father's glory to others. Christ gives us all the knowledge He has of God because He (God) wants us to accept His Agape love and by Faith be conformed to the image of His Son, so He (the Son) can be the First-born among many brethren; a Father, an elder brother, many children, one big family. Romans 8:29; Isaiah 9:6. It has been my experience that I can know the character of the love of God and the submissive faith of Jesus, but if I don't constantly behold it I'm not going to be changed into the same image of Jesus. So let us fix our eyes in Jesus, the Truth about the Father, and the author and finisher of faith. John 14:6; Hebrews 12:2.

~ Carlos A. Hernández, (Manatí, Puerto Rico)

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

"It is He [God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in ... Lift up your eyes on high and see. Who has created these? He who is bringing out their host by number, He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power – not one is missing [or, fails]." ~ Isaiah 40:22,26.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that it is by the Word of God that all the heavenly hosts are suspended in the firmament and orderly go about their orbits without falling (Job 26:7)? Do you believe the Word of God has this kind of sovereignty and creative power over all Creation? Then why do you not believe in *“the One who is able to keep YOU from falling [sinning] and to make YOU stand joyful and faultless in His glorious presence.”* (Jude 1:24)? Do you believe, when the Word of God said, *“Let there be light”*, there was light (Gen. 1:3)? So why do you not believe that you will “be perfect” when His creative voice says, *“Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matt. 5:48); and *“Be holy, for I Jehovah your God am holy!”*? Do you have as much faith as the Roman Centurion as recorded in Matthew chapter 8?

*“When He [Jesus] entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him asking for help: ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible anguish.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ But the centurion replied, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Instead, **just say the word and my servant will be healed.** For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, ‘Go’ and he goes, and to another ‘Come’ and he comes, and to my slave ‘Do this’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this He was amazed and said to those who followed Him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel!’ ... Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go; just as you believed, it will be done for you.’ And the servant was healed at that hour.” ~ Verses 5-10,13.*

We have seen that God often speaks through our preconceived ideas and opinions, holding up a mirror wherein we might see ourselves in our true relationship to Him. Paul alludes to this truth by saying:



“For now we only see an indistinct image in a mirror; but then face to face ...”

~ 1 Corinthians 13:12 ~

Try this experiment: stand in a darkened room during a bright sunny day and look out through a glass window. What do you see? You will see nothing but light illuminating all the clear scenery. Then do the same when it is dark outside that night. Stand in a lit room and look out into the darkness. What do you see? You will see your own reflection amidst the dark and unclear images. And that is why, when you read the Old Testament, if you only see darkness, bloodshed and violence, with all its fear and condemnation, “a ministration of death”, without projecting the light of the New Testament all the way through the Old Testament, our Father says, “*You assumed I was like you.*” (Ps. 50:21).

“... For until this day the same veil remains untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament, which veil is taken away in Christ ... Nevertheless, when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord [Jesus], the veil will be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

~ 2 Corinthians 3:14,16-17.

The veil of misapprehension has been removed by the life of Jesus. When you believe that the Son of God is the *full* revelation of God’s character, the veil is stripped away and that light will illuminate the entire Old Testament Scriptures. You will then have an EVERLASTING gospel/covenant which confirms the truth that God is forever “***merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and full of goodness and truth.***”

If we are allowing Jesus to fully abide in us the veil will be taken away. Thus when we look into the Old Testament we will be looking through the eyes of Jesus. Our perception of our Father will become clearer and, as we behold His beautiful unchanging character, we ourselves will be changed:

*“But we all, with **unveiled faces**, beholding as in a mirror the glory [character] of the Lord, are changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another [from selfishness to selflessness], which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:18.*

**With His love abiding in us “our love is made perfect”
and “perfect love casts out fear.” (1 Jn. 4:17-18)**

It is my prayer that all of you will submissively seek and behold our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and receive His Father’s name (character) written in your foreheads, transforming you into His likeness by the renewing of your mind, so that you too will be found “singing a new song.” (Rev. 14:3). We will sing with the Psalmist:

“O sing to Jehovah a new song: sing to Jehovah, all the earth. Sing to Jehovah, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but Jehovah made the heavens ... O worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him, all the earth.” ~ Psalm 96:1-5,9.

In God’s Kingdom “*though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of this world, but are mighty through God to demolish strongholds, casting down arguments, and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.**” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Our battle is “not against flesh and blood, but against powers, the rulers of darkness of this world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.” (Eph. 6:12).*

**The true battle between God and Satan is not
for the Middle East, but for our minds**

When the Torah (Law: character of the Father) is inscribed in our minds by the Spirit of Jesus, God will be “*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*” Paul wrote, “*the natural man does not receive the things [truths] of the Spirit of God; for they [the things/truths of God] are*

As on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit rained upon God's people (Acts 2), there will be a latter rain just before Christ's second coming and God's people will once again be revived and a return to primitive godliness will be its result.

foolishness unto him; and neither can he know [experience] them, because they are spiritually discerned ... but **we have the mind of Christ.**" (1 Cor. 2:14,16). With the mind of Jesus in us we will be in harmony with "the knowledge of God." God has said without this mind we become "destroyed for lack of that knowledge" (Hos. 4:1-2,6) because "those who live by the sword [worldly weapons and coercion], will perish by the sword." (Matt. 26:52; Rev. 13:10). Unified in Christ we will live "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah." (Zech. 4:6). Those who worship Him will worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23-24) and will be fitted to live upon the new earth.

*"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea [division] ... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them, and be their God [Provider]. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and **there will be no more death** [of anyone nor anything], neither sorrow, nor crying, **neither shall there be any more pain**: for the former things are passed away.'" ~ Revelation 21:1,3-4.*

*"In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of the heaven, and with the creeping thing of the ground: **I will break the bow and the sword and war from the earth**, and I will make them to lie down safely." ~ Hosea 2:18.*



*“Come, let us go up the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob, so **He can teach us of His ways**, and we will **walk in His paths**: for out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation will not take up the sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore** ... The wolf will live with the lamb; the leopard will lie down with the young goat. The calf and the lion will graze together, and a little child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, and their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on vipers’ dens. **They will neither harm nor destroy on my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah**, as the waters cover the sea.” ~ Isaiah 2:3-4; 11:6-9. (See also, Hebrews 12:18,22-24).*



In Daniel chapter 7 Daniel foretold of a system that would seek to distort all that the Messiah came to do. This system would “*think to change the Appointed Times and Laws.*”

(see, Dan. 7:25). Instead of God’s Law being spiritual (Rom. 7:14) this system would portray God’s Law as

nothing more than arbitrarily imposed rules, a legislative code that can be changed, and that someone has to be punished if these rules are broken. **In this period of church history, known as “the Dark Ages”, humans began to view God operating no differently than how we operate thus infusing fear and condemnation in our minds instead of love.**

Daniel goes on to say that, after 100’s of years of humans being brainwashed into this system, God will sit upon His throne and “*a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands upon thousands ministered to Him, with millions upon millions waiting before Him. The court was set in judgment, and the books were opened.*” (Dan. 7:10). Our unconverted minds see this judgment scene as a fearful sight where God will sit and review all our sins ready to place us on trial, then condemn us,

then sentence us to death. It should be noted that Daniel chapter 7 was written in Aramaic but when Daniel speaks of this “vision” in Daniel chapters 8 and 9 he uses the Hebrew word מְרָאָה (*mareh*; Dan. 9:24) which also carries the concept of “mirror.” The feminine form of this word is used by Moses in Exodus 38:8 referring to the bronze laver which was built “*from the mirrors [marah] of the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting.*”

This laver was in the courtyard *outside* the sanctuary along with the altar for burnt offerings, which was also overlaid with bronze. (Each piece of furniture *inside* the sanctuary was overlaid with gold). Bronze is a *man-made* alloy of copper and tin. Tin is identified with dross (Is. 1:25; KJV) revealing that the rituals carried out in the courtyard were for man to see and *reflect* upon our own impure belief of penal substitution and our misguided appeasement-based mindset. This is why John, while in vision, was instructed to “*measure the temple of God, the altar [of incense], and those who worship therein*” but was told not to measure the courtyard “*for it has been given over to the gentiles.*” (Rev. 11:1-2). The “gentiles” here represent all those unbelievers not willing to follow Jesus, our High Priest, into a more deeper and purer understanding of the knowledge of God and His ways. They have chosen not to enter into the heavenly temple (sanctuary) by faith and “worship therein.” (Heb. 8:1-2; 7:22-25).

So, if we were to remain in the courtyard and look at this judgment scene found in the Book of Daniel with the veil over our eyes, and not with the light of the everlasting gospel, we will only see and experience a reflection of our own fallen system of justice.¹ However, when the veil is removed, we only see a loving God “investigating” us, as open books before Him, searching for, and **diagnosing**, our cancerous sin problem. Then, knowing

¹ For a more detailed study of the meaning of bronze/brass in Scripture and why Jesus referred to Himself as the bronze/brass serpent made by Moses in Numbers 21:4-9 (see, Jn. 3:14) please refer to the book, *Cross Examined & Cross Encountered*. (See inside back cover).

our condition, He delicately seeks to cleanse our record books of sin. How does He do this? It is not by Jesus manipulating (changing) the record books as some might teach, or hiding us behind Himself in order to protect us from an angry Father as traditional Christianity may teach. No. But rather by our Father injecting (uniting) us with His life (Spirit) through Jesus (our only remedy) so that our sins go into “remission.” As a result, our “old man” (nature) dies, thus bringing healing, until WE are “*conformed [changed] to the image of His Son*” (Rom. 8:29) and have a clean bill (record) of health—no more sinning.

Like in the case of the paralytic and adulterous woman, God’s mercy will result in true justice (justification). It will ad-JUST us back into alignment (harmony) with our heavenly Father empowering us to walk the true path of sanctification (“go, and sin no more”).

Being “covered” with the blood of Christ means much more than we have been taught. Jesus told us to “drink” His blood (His life) in, permitting it to become one with us, for “*he that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him.*” (Jn. 6:53-58). Being “covered” with the blood of Jesus is His life in us, filling us to overflowing to the point that our hearts are brought into harmony with His heart, our desires are changed to be in union with His desires, we think His thoughts, and we live His life. Only then will the Father see the righteousness of His Son as a covering because His righteousness will be completely reproduced in us. As God’s New Covenant promise of writing His Law (character) in our hearts and minds takes root (Heb. 10:16), He promises, “*I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins will I remember no more.*” (Vs. 17).

**Why will He not remember our sins?
Because we will not be reminding Him of them**

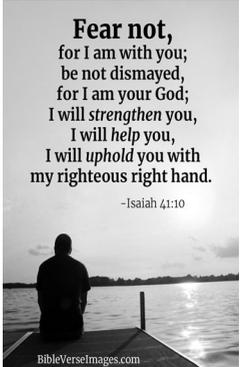
“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love [agápe].” ~ Colossians 1:13.

At Jesus' baptism the Father spoke saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* (Matt. 3:17). The Greek word for "beloved" here is *agápetos* which reveals Jesus is the One upon whom the Father has GIVEN all things (Jn. 3:35) and He has GIVEN us all of His beloved Son in order for us to GIVE (reflect) all glory back to Him — God's design for life restored.

*"And hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love [agápe/Christ] has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been GIVEN to us ... [therefore] Behold what manner of love [agápe] the Father has GIVEN unto us, that we should be called children of God. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.**"*

~ Romans 5:5; 1 John 3:1.

Daniel goes on to say that *"judgment was GIVEN to the saints of the Most High."* (Dan. 7:22). The word "given" here is to be understood as "imparted." By the Father's indwelling Spirit He will **cleanse** us from every lying argument and every preconceived idea that the father of lies has instilled deep into our hearts and minds. Through careful and submissive reasoning our Father faithfully invites us to **investigate Him as an open book** (Ps. 34:8), as He longs to purge every **abomination** that has **desolated** our soul **temple** through fear and condemnation (1 Cor. 6:18-20), and to impart (give) us **righteous judgment/discernment** so that we will stop misjudging HIM and finally be eternally reconciled to our unchanging, merciful, gracious, and longsuffering Father of love.



Fear not,
for I am with you;
be not dismayed,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with
my righteous right hand.

-Isaiah 41:10

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"Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, 'That You [God] might be justified in Your sayings, and might prevail when You [God] are judged.'" ~ Romans 3:4.

*"Great and marvelous are Your works, Jehovah God Almighty;
just and true are Your ways, Sovereign of the nations." ~ Revelation 15:3.*



*In loving memory of Deane Gilman
who fell asleep in Jesus just
before the publication of this book*

*Finding leads to losing, losing lets you find,
living leads to dying, life leaves death behind.
Finding leads to losing, there's truly no other way,
no one can find The Christ-like Life any other way.*

*When you give yourself to Jesus, there is death that is within,
there's a cleansing that He does for you that frees you from your sin.
Self does die for Jesus reigns, His power is for real,
the Holy Ghost will work for you, and fill you with Christ's zeal.*

*You'll desire to live for others, because self no longer reigns,
the grace of Christ is sufficient friend, so praise His holy name.
Lift up your head and praise the Lord, and surrender all to Him,
for God through Jesus Christ our Lord has freed us all from sin.*

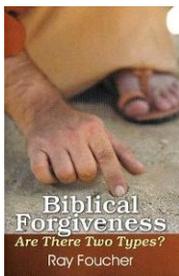
*So what life will you choose today, one of sorrow guilt and pain,
or the one that Jesus has for you, one that's filled to the latter rain?
It's up to you to choose dear saint, will it be Jesus filling you,
or will you satisfy yourself and let the devil live in you?*

*Finding leads to losing, losing lets you find,
living leads to dying, life leaves death behind.
Finding leads to losing, there's truly no other way,
no one can find The Christ-like Life any other way.*

~ Deane Gilman (1945-2020) ~

Rest in peace my friend!

**For a deeper understanding to what you've just read
we recommend the following:**



Biblical Forgiveness

Are There Two Types?

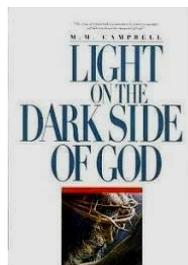
By Ray Foucher

This study shows, by looking at the original words, that forgiveness is a two-part transaction. God forgives every sin, the question is whether or not we receive that forgiveness. There are actually different Greek words for forgiveness granted and forgiveness received. One is always unconditional while the other is always conditional.

Light on the Dark Side of God

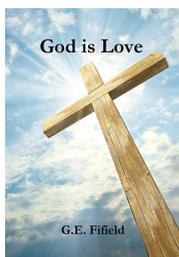
By Marilyn Campbell

- Why would a loving God burn humans eternally for the sins of one short lifetime?
- How did the gentle Jesus perfectly reflect the “fire-breathing” Old Testament God who, according to Scripture, He came to reveal?
- How can a “killing” God tell humans “Thou shalt not kill” and yet to pattern their character after His own?
- Why didn’t God destroy human rebellion early-on, before it became full blown?
- Do humans really have free will, with God planning to execute those whose choices He does not like?
- How does “the wrath of God” apply to our generation?



Follow the trail of Biblical clues in *Light on the Dark Side of God* to an amazing and wonderful new picture of God. Especially if the topic of the character of God is new to you, this book will be of great value in beginning to see God in a new light. It presents a good summary of the major issues. You will see that God does not have a dark side as many imagine. “... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)

Download the above books for FREE at characterofgod.org



God Is Love

By George E. Fifield

Elder Fifield reveals the tender love of a Father and the spiritual nature of the law, atonement and plan of salvation. The ideas expressed in this book provide a seedbed of thought for a true understanding of the character of God.

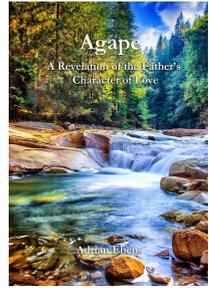
Available for FREE download at maranathamedia.com

Agape

A Revelation of the Father's Character of Love

By Adrian Ebens

The Bible has on occasion seemed to make it impossible to reconcile the apparent contradictions it presented before me. I share with you here the conclusion of 16 years of research. Through it I have been led to several countries to meet with other searchers on this same quest, and what a blessing it has been for all of us. I testify to you that God is indeed love. He is not a person of violence. He is not intimidating us with the threat of roasting His wayward children in hell for eternity as millions believe. I realize that many are not convinced but I simply invite you to take this journey and see for yourself and discover the fact that God is love. - Adrian Ebens.



Acts of Our Gentle God

The Glorious Dawning of a New Day on the Character of God
Jay A. Schulberg



Acts of Our Gentle God

The Glorious Dawning of a New Day on the Character of God

By Jay A. Schulberg

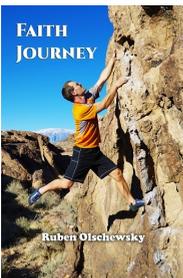
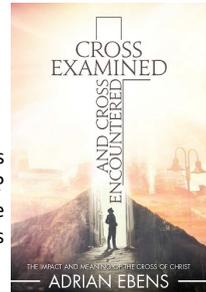
Acts of Our Gentle God presents compelling evidence from the Bible to exonerate God of the charges that He is uncaring, judgmental, controlling, unfair, bad-tempered, or violent. The book demonstrates that the entire Bible, correctly understood, is in harmony with the definitive statement "God is love." (1 John 4:8).

Cross Examined and Cross Encountered

The Impact and Meaning of the Cross of Christ

By Adrian Ebens

Why was the Cross required and who required it? Why was the Cross necessary for our salvation? Was God's wrath satisfied by the death of His Son? What is God's justice and is it different to our justice? Why did Jesus compare Himself to a bronze serpent on a pole? What does the Israelite Sanctuary tell us about the Cross?



Faith Journey

By Ruben Olschewsky

Understanding the subject of the two covenants is an important part of understanding the gospel and reading the Scriptures in a correct framework. This booklet introduces this subject in a simple manner to provide the reader with essential elements to understand this subject. There is much confusion on the subject of the covenants because of misunderstandings which took place within Christianity many centuries ago. The simplicity of the covenants is expressed in the life of Abraham and this is what Paul tells us in the book of Galatians. "For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants..." (Galatians 4:22-24). May your faith journey be blessed as you read.

Download the above books for FREE at fatheroflove.info

In this age of uncertainty, people are starting to question God's character

- ⇒ Does God condemn and judge others while commanding us not to judge but to love others unconditionally?
- ⇒ Does God torture His enemies for eternity in a lake of fire while at the same time commanding us to love our enemies?
- ⇒ Does God spitefully send plagues and pestilence upon people who choose not to love Him while demanding we pray for health and happiness to fall upon those who do not love us?
- ⇒ Are we not to live a character like His? “Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” (Lev. 19:2); “Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48).

In Jn. 14:9 Jesus said, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” When did Jesus ever condemn or judge anyone? When did Jesus torture anyone? When did Jesus kill anyone? Jesus counsels all of us to anoint our eyes with the spiritual eye-salve He is offering so that we might “see” more clearly (Rev. 3:18). Then, as we read the Bible through this new eyesight, the veil of fear and condemnation is taken away (2 Cor. 3:14-16). Jesus is asking each of us, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” (Lk. 10:26). The key is understanding how to read the Scriptures. Do you read it through your carnal understanding or through the Spirit of Christ? As the true character of our heavenly Father is revealed through the Spirit of His Son, we begin to see that God is not a blood-thirsty tyrant who is against sinners, but that God and man share a common enemy who seeks to destroy our faith in a non-condemning Father who loves us with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His strength.