

A night scene in a forest. In the foreground, a campfire burns brightly, casting a warm glow. Three people are sitting on chairs around the fire. To the right, a dark-colored truck is parked on a grassy area. The background is filled with tall evergreen trees under a dark blue sky with stars and a faint moon. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

The Nearness of God
How Precious to Know
the Presence of
my Lord

Gavin Devlin

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The Reality of the Reconciliation between God the Father and Man

Before I start let's just kneel in prayer: Our gracious Father, we delight again to come before Your throne of mercy and grace to find help in this time of need. If ever there was a time of need, it is now. Father, we look around the world at the uncertainty, but we look to Heaven with assurance, for we know that You are in control, and that all Your plans will come to fruition if we just continue to follow You, Lord, and give You our hearts. I thank You for giving us Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, and how wonderfully He works in and through us to do Your good will. I pray that You will speak through me. I thank You for the preparation that has been done in putting this together, and Lord, I look forward to blessing Your people, Your children, at this time. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

I want to investigate the reality of the reconciliation between God and man. What does reconciliation mean?

Congregation: To be brought back together.

To be brought back together! Can you be reconciled and not be brought back together?

Congregation: No.

It wouldn't make sense would it? Because it's not **re**-conciliation if that's the case. And so my title: "How precious to know the Presence of my LORD" – that's the long title. How precious to know the presence of my LORD, or "The Nearness of God" – that's the short title.

Creation – Why was man created? Man was made in God’s image for a purpose: to fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgement had come, and to worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water and all that is in them. Revelation 14:7. Adam and Eve had the same precious privilege as we do today. They were created for that most precious work, to give glory to God, which is understanding and representing His character. The same work we have in these last days, which is to share the “Everlasting Gospel,” God’s plan for humanity that shows what He is like. Every creature that was ever created was created to fear God, to see His awesomeness, and to respond to Him, to give glory to Him in their life, and to worship Him.

The “hour of His judgement” came as a result of Lucifer rebelling in heaven and putting God ‘in the spotlight’ by raising some issues about Him that were just not true. He trafficked lies and deceit about God, and a third of the angels fell into his deception (Revelation 12:4), and lost their glorious and honourable position in heaven. Even the loyal angels were confused and disturbed by Satan’s arguments. It became necessary for God to clear the air and address the doubts that the created beings had in Him about His character and how the principles of His government operate, especially His mercy and justice.

To accomplish this, God did not call a meeting and condemn Lucifer and the fallen angels before all the faithful angels that were there. He didn’t go about trying to prove the other guy wrong. What He also didn’t do was to say: “don’t worry about everything you heard. Just trust Me!” He wasn’t a salesman.

Blind acceptance of God's will wouldn't bring back the atmosphere of love and fellowship that God desired, because after all the lies and innuendo, after the sad reality of the war of words – the polemos, the argument (Revelation 12:7) in heaven – there was a breach in trust, assurance, and stability in the universe. God knew the extent of the doubts and disorder, even if the created beings didn't.

So at that point, if God just got up and said "Just trust Me," His words would have been cheap and empty. Satan had specifically accused God of being selfish and untrustworthy, and words aren't enough to overcome that accusation. There is an expression: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." So you have to taste and see that God is good (Psalm 34:8). The universe had to taste and see.

And so it became, as it were, a theatre – but not people pretending, not people acting, not people just taking on a role. Neither God nor His Son took on a role. We are not role takers. We are actually in a real war... and it's over the character of God and how His government operates. God particularly was being observed and judged on how He would deal with the problems caused by Lucifer's rebellion.

What was required was this *demonstration* of how God's kingdom principles work. And so God, although having already had the plan to create man, put this plan into action after the fall of Lucifer. It was through watching what happened on this world, through the multiplication of the family of man, that God's kingdom would become clear.

So God created this couple, made in His image. "In the likeness of God made He them" male and female: the male the head of the home, and the female the helper, the assistant. Just as the Father is the head of Christ, and Christ assists His Father in all things, so Eve

was to assist her husband in ruling the things of the earth. In their dominion over the things of this earth, over the creatures of this planet and the raising of their children, they would demonstrate through their obedience and faithfulness to God what God was like, and how His government operates.

After He had formed Adam from the dust of the ground, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul. In receiving God's Spirit, Adam received vitalizing power, the gift of life ... he began to breathe and he opened his eyes and he looked up and saw his Creator. That must have been an awesome moment for Adam.

But it wasn't enough for Adam to be just living and breathing! God wanted a deeper relationship with Adam, and so together with the vitalizing power of life was given God's presence, which also filled Adam and Eve. The manifestation of that internal reality was a beautiful external glow, a garment of light that showed that God's presence was in them and with them.

The Bible tells us they were naked but they were not ashamed. They had no reason to be ashamed for they were covered perfectly, as God had created them, with this beautiful light. That light was very similar to the light that Moses had when he had been up on the mountain for forty days with God. When he came back down his face shone, and so he was asked to put something over his face to cover the glory. It was too bright for the people to look upon. Jesus also had this light when He went up to the mountain of transfiguration with His disciples. Moses and Elijah came down, and the Father spoke at that time – "this is my beloved Son: hear Him," and again

there was that glorious light upon Christ. This is what Adam and Eve originally were clothed in.

The Mirror

As Adam and his wife reflected the glory of the Creator and His Son, so too nature was to reflect that beautiful relationship between Adam and Eve, and between them and God. As man submitted to and obeyed the will of his Creator, expanding and sharing the knowledge of His character and ways, so would nature submit to man and the garden would expand in beauty and fruitfulness. In this, the character of God and the principles of His government would be beautifully seen, and perfectly represented.

Unfortunately, as we all know very too well, not everything we plan goes to plan. And as it is for us, so it is for God. Not everything in God's plan has gone to plan.

When people or angels have the most precious gift of the freedom to choose, there is always the chance that someone would choose to say "No, I don't want to do it that way. I don't want to do it your way. I want to do it my way!"

Therefore, there are certain principles of God's character and government that apply, whether in good times or bad times.

Principle 1 – God has given every moral creature the gift of the freedom to choose ... Everyone!

Principle 2 – God will never revoke that gift, no matter the consequences ... good or bad.

Principle 3 – God is willing to wear the consequences of our bad choices... So should we be willing to bear the consequences of our bad choices, but that’s not where we’re at!

Principle 4 – God will do all He can to save us from our bad choices, from warning us to attempting to rescue us. The only thing He will not do to save us from our bad choices is to force us. He will NEVER use force.

Principle 5 – God will allow us to suffer the consequences of our bad choices no matter how severe they are if we refuse to accept His offer to help us and to save us. Due to his commitment to free choice, He will not and cannot step in and intervene in our lives uninvited. The good news is we can pray on behalf of others. As fellow human beings we can invite God to step in, so there is a great role for us to play!

Principle 6 – God is willing to take full responsibility for the outcomes of all things under His Sovereign rule because He allows it to happen. He could say “No, I am not going to allow that thing to happen. I am not going to allow you to have that freedom of choice. I can’t allow that, because you are about to make a bad decision!” God doesn’t do that. He takes full responsibility for the outcomes, even if it means our death. He gives us the freedom to go in that direction because of the preceding 5 principles.

Principle 7 – God as our Creator, grieves when we turn from Him, and He is afflicted in all our afflictions (Isaiah 63:9). He also rejoices with singing when we turn back to Him. Therefore, He understands us intimately. And that’s why He does all He can to warn us before we make our bad choices. He has committed to do all He can to rescue us when we do make our bad choices and go in the wrong direction.

He has a rescue package, the greatest rescue package ever put in place! And He desires to restore us to our original relationship with Him by demonstrating His love: the underlying principle and foundation of His character and His government! It isn't easy for us to comprehend His love, so God has been demonstrating His loving governance for the last 6000 years, waiting for the day that it will all click into place and humanity will have its 'eureka' moment and Jesus can return!

Adam and Eve

We move to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. We know the outcome. The serpent tempted them, deceived them and caused them to fall through their own willingness to reject God's word and receive the serpent's word instead. They used their freedom to choose to live another way than that which God had outlined for them. This resulted in the glory of God departing from them. That garment of light which they were created with, they no longer possessed, and now they realised their nakedness.

Notice the principles, which I just mentioned before, in this story.

Principle 1: They used the gift of their freedom to choose to take and eat the forbidden fruit.

Principle 2: God did not revoke their freedom to choose half way through the temptation.

Principle 3: God was willing to bear the consequences of being rejected both in the pain it would cause Him, and the pain it would cause them.

Principle 4: He revealed His plan to save them. Good news! God never leaves us abandoned. He won't ever accept being rejected without trying to win back our love. He does whatever He can to restore that relationship with us, that we might be reconciled back to Him.

Principle 5: The consequences of their choice became self-evident when their glorious garments of light faded and they were removed from their garden home.

Principle 6: Knowing what the consequences of their sin would bring to the couple, God still permitted to learn their lessons out in the larger garden of life, outside the Garden of Eden. This world became the theatre and classroom of life. This is where nature was going to reflect what is in Adam and Eve and their family. The human heart is the thermostat which governs the stress or comfort levels of life. Nature is the thermometer which reveals where the levels are at. Notice the human heart is invisible and nature is visible. As they journeyed through the rest of their lives, they would learn the nature of their hearts, and the consequences of their sin, through the reflection given back to them through nature. This applies equally in our modern times. The thorns were a manifestation of Adam and Eve's rebellion, just like the ecological chaos of today is a manifestation of the chaos and disorder in the heart of mankind. Question – What is nature going to have to tell us before we recognize our brokenness?

Another thing which is important to remember is the pain God is suffering as a result of the fall of man. Being separated from His children causes God no end of pain. Reaching out to men and being constantly rejected, knowing that rejection has awful consequences,

fills Christ with anguish. It isn't easy for God to see His children have to walk through our world of suffering and pain. Every thorn and every thistle, experienced by man, is a visible mirror of the pain our Heavenly Father also suffers, while separated from His loved ones.

The Consequences of the Fall

Consequence Number 1: Judgement and condemnation

When Adam and Eve heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden, their sense of self-condemnation caused Adam and Eve to run and hide among the trees. There is no record of any condemnation coming from God. God simply asks a series of questions to try and prompt Adam and Eve to think about their choices and how they were feeling at that point - how they were feeling about Him, and how they were feeling about themselves.

In Romans chapter 5, verses 15 to 17, Paul picks up on this point. I have highlighted what Adam did in the red in my notes, and what God has done, through Christ, in blue. It's just balance - Adam and Christ; Adam, Christ; red, blue. So we are able to pick up, in this flow, exactly who is the condemner, who is the judge. Is God the judge? Is God the condemner? Or is Adam the judge? Is Adam the condemner? So watch the balance as it goes [to and fro]:

In Romans 5:15

“But not as **the offence (through Adam)**, so also *is the free gift (through Christ)*. For if through **the offence of one many be dead (through Adam)**, much more **the grace** of God, and **the gift by grace (through Christ)**, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”

Verse 16

“And not as *it was* by **one that sinned (Adam)**, *so is* the gift (Christ): for **the judgment was by one to condemnation (Adam)**, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification (Christ).”

Verse 17

“For if by **one man's offence death reigned** by one (Adam), much more they which receive **abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** shall reign in life **by one, Jesus Christ.**”

See that beautiful balance all the way through! It would be a twisting of the scriptures to say that God was the judge in the light of how Paul explained it here ... Adam ... Christ, Adam ... Christ. The judgement, and the condemnation was from ADAM ... **it wasn't from God!**

It was their self-condemnation which provoked their haste to run and hide when called by God – and aren't we just like that also? How many times in our lives, whether it's spiritual or some other situation in life, are we the ones running or hiding from someone or something because of something we did? It was Adam and Eve's self-condemnation which provoked their desire to run and hide, thus initiating the separation, which sin causes, between them and God. It is our self-condemnation which also causes us to run, causing separation between ourselves, and causing our separation from God.

Consequences Number 2: The Separation

Isaiah 59, Verse 1:

“Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

God's arm is not in a sling that he cannot help us anymore. And He doesn't need hearing!

But verse 2 says:

"But **your** iniquities have separated between **you** and your God, and **your** sins have hid *his* face from **you**, that he will not hear."

See, God won't hear us! But think about it. Why won't He hear? He sees Adam and Eve in the garden, so why couldn't He hear? It's because **they** had run away and hidden from Him! **They** had stopped talking to Him. There is no chance you can hear someone who has stopped talking to you ... right? God's ear is not heavy that He cannot hear! But He can't hear when you are not speaking to Him.

Congregation: Unless you are speaking to the wrong god.

Yes, that would be a problem too!

Congregation: You would be speaking to the air.

It is our separation which stems from our self-condemnation, running and hiding from God, that makes God not able to hear us.

Consequence Number 3: Death

Once we have judged ourselves, condemned ourselves, and run away from the Source of life ... what is the obvious outcome always going to be?

Congregation: Death.

Death! Separating from the life Source is death! It is not an arbitrary punishment from God. It never was and never will be!

God hates being separated from His children

God's desire is to be near His children ... Always! His desire has never changed. It is clearly demonstrated in Genesis 3 that sin does not separate God from us. It separates *us from God*. We are the ones that run! God does not have a problem with us. We have a problem with God!

The very fact that God came to the garden searching for His children shows us clearly how much God loves them. It demonstrates also how much He loves us! His desire to be with them had not in any way diminished, as His desire to be with us has not in any way, shape or form been diminished. The reason that God cannot draw close to us in our sinful state is not because He doesn't want to be near us ... it's not because He doesn't want to be with us! It's because we don't want to be near Him. We don't want to be with Him! The brightness of His glory and the purity of His character would be to us a consuming fire of *self-condemnation* causing our instant death ... and this God will avoid at all costs.

Isn't that amazing? A marvellous thing! God's love for us is so strong. Knowing that His goodness is so powerful, He will not even reveal the fullness of His glory to us for fear that it will drive us away and kill us: and so He has to reveal Himself gradually, in moderation, slowly re-establishing His connection with us.

We know that all communication from Heaven is through God's Son. God, our Father, no longer speaks personally with us. He speaks through His Son. Even His Spirit flows through His Son! When God wants to talk to us, He speaks through His representative, Christ. Christ is the one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

As time went by, the separation between God and His children became tougher and tougher. To be away from one child is heart breaking for God. Imagine all your children pushing you away when you so desperately want to be with them. The focus of His agape love on each individual child or His first two in the garden in Eden is and was so strong that rejection is and was like death to Him and to His Son. Rejection pierced Their hearts in a way I don't believe we understand. Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world because of the separation caused by our sin. He shares His Father's pain. God longs to be near us and see us live forever in joy and fulfillment.

There have been some individuals who allowed God to come close to them in the person of His Son. Remember Enoch ... Enoch walked with God. He and God were so close that he walked all the way into Heaven with Him ... returning to His Father's house.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And I am sure the Scriptures don't tell all the stories of all the individuals that had a beautiful relationship with God prior to the flood. After the flood there was Abraham, although Abraham did make mistakes. Did Abraham make mistakes?

Congregation: Yes.

Yet Abraham was called "a friend of God." This must have impacted his children and their relationship with God. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph all had good relationships with God even though they had their struggles. They all held on by faith to God's promises. Beautiful! They must have been reconciled!

Unfortunately though, the overwhelming majority of God's children did not have, and basically did not desire to have, a relationship with their heavenly Father for various reasons; and that continues to hurt God beyond our ability to comprehend.

Remember the feeling when you have felt the worst ... when you have been rejected by somebody. That hurts! I've shared my story once before about shedding tears in the factory where I worked because of rejection from a fellow worker over a long period of time. He was a fellow Christian. That hurt! And I carried that for a long time!

Imagine the pain our Father has been carrying for a long, long time! What was God going to do when His children kept pushing Him away, not wanting to know Him?

Well, when He led the children of Israel out of Egypt, setting them free from the bondage and slavery they had been under for centuries, He told Moses, as recorded in Exodus 25:8, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." God knew that the Israelites, having long been in bondage, needed a visible representation of His presence so that they could believe He was near them. Through the sanctuary system they would gain understanding of Him, thus drawing them closer.

I will just give a little demonstration of what it probably looked like. [Draws on the white board a tiny rectangle representing the sanctuary and around that a large circle representing at least a million people of Israel]

Right in the middle of the Israelites there is the Sanctuary ... and in the Sanctuary, there was another little compartment, the Tabernacle of the Sanctuary ... and in the Tabernacle of the Sanctuary, there was

another smaller compartment, the Holy Place, and behind the curtain the Most Holy Place there was ... can you still see the picture? Can you see the detail of the Ark of the Covenant I just drew? [laughter] Ok! That's where God dwells! His Shekinah glory dwelt above the ark: in the midst of the children of Israel as they camped while wandering in the wilderness.

As they came out of Egypt God presented Himself to them in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, but still, He wanted to get up close and personal with them. He wanted to be on ground level with them. The children of Israel donated the materials required, and they built the Sanctuary. God arranged a special little place where He could dwell amongst them in that little spot. The ark of His testimony was there, representing His eternal throne, and when He came to be with them, this was His spot.

But really, do we think for a minute that God would be content to just stay in a small compartment and be limited to His little place of nearness to His children? No! That was not enough. It was not enough for Him and it certainly wasn't enough for Israel to learn more about Him. They continued, like Adam, to misunderstand God, and imagined Him to be something far different to what He actually was like. They thought that His limiting Himself to the Most Holy Place was a bit strange ... perhaps that's what they thought ... it's not written in the scriptures. But why does God hide in the Sanctuary, in the Tabernacle, in the Most Holy Place, over the Ark and none of us get to see Him? Except for when they were moving around, in the cloud by day, and in the pillar of fire by night.

It wasn't enough. We have heard a lot of sermons about this confusion about God that we have as human beings, and it was no

different for them back then. They thought God was this great Judge, a great condemner of all who fell short of His glory: especially their enemies out there. He surely must hate all them! So they weren't getting the picture ... they weren't getting the understanding.

And so the lessons God planned to be learned through the Sanctuary and its services were never learned by Israel. In fact, it was so bad that the children of Israel went after other gods because they were more tangible and apparently easier to appease.

Did God need to be appeased? Did He want that in any way? No! God just wanted to be known by His own children, and this was proving a hard task to accomplish. God knew the only way men would come to know Him as He really was, was to be represented accurately by something they could see. Maybe a fellow man? So this He did through His Son.

We move from the Sanctuary to the Son of God.

“A body thou hast prepared Me” – Another dwelling place for God

God sent the One being in the universe who knew Him intimately and perfectly and could represent Him as He truly is. Amen?

Congregation: Amen!

Hallelujah to that!

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to represent Him. Jesus came and said emphatically, “He that has seen Me has seen My Father. The words that I speak to you are the words that My Father gives Me ... and I do those things that I see My Father do.” (John 14:9-10)

So if we want to know what God is like ... and we want and need to know what God is like ... then exhibit A ... it’s Jesus! As this certainly didn’t work (pointing to the picture of Sanctuary on the whiteboard) ... It wasn’t enough for them or us, though there are lessons from it that we can still gain insights from.

Hebrew 10:5

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,
but a body hast thou prepared me.’

When Jesus came it wasn’t for the purpose of dying. Men think that God needs blood to forgive us. But That wasn’t what it was about!

“SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS YOU WOULD NOT, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED ME” ... A body? Just to be sacrificed? No, no, no, no!

A body through which He could represent His Father's character ... beautifully ... to the people around Him.

See how clearly this verse states the issue at hand! It wasn't about **appeasing** God, it was about **representing** God that we might know Him: and Jesus did this in the flesh.

John 1:14

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Of course we know at the end of His ministry, when praying to the Father, Jesus said, "I have glorified you on earth: I have **finished** the work You gave me to do" (John 17). This work was to reveal to people what God was really like: and Jesus did that perfectly. But there was more to it than just that. Remember God wanted to be close to His children; and it was through Christ, or should I say **in** Christ, that God the Father was able to take another step closer to being with His children.

Ok ... so here is Jesus (drawing on the whiteboard a figure of Jesus). So Jesus is there ... and where is God? Before God had a little place over the box in the Sanctuary. Now God had a place **IN** His Son. "God was **IN** Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

The Ark was immobile except for when they travelled, and the Shekinah certainly wasn't there when the Ark was being carried around. But now God has His Son to make His character clear, to add insight into what He was trying to say in the sanctuary system. Jesus was out and about, mixing with people, and the Father was able to mix with more of His children through Christ. Can you see the step

from this permanent spot [the Tabernacle], to a place where He could get out and about through His Son?

Second Corinthians 5:18

“And **all** things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation”

That’s the next step ...

Verse 19

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

Notice closely: the reconciliation between us and God was not based on a system of *appeasement*. It couldn’t be because appeasement does not correctly manifest the *character* of God. Condemnation came from who? From Adam, not from God. Remember Romans 5:16.

Separation came from Adam, not from God. Adam ran and hid, not God. God knew what was in Adam’s heart. Adam just didn’t know what was in God’s heart. He had been blindsided by the enemy who had twisted his mind through fake news about God. He swallowed it hook, line and sinker!

Misunderstanding was Adam’s problem, not God’s. Therefore, the solution to saving us from sin was not to create more fear and condemnation through a system of appeasement and sacrifice, but to create peace and assurance that God loves us - and that love for us has never failed - and this He did through a body He had prepared ... His Son.

A true representation of God's goodness in all its glory had to be given for the minds of men to be set at ease. It was *at easement* which was necessary, **not** appeasement. We needed our hearts settled, to be at ease with God - to see what He was truly like in ALL his love. Only seeing God's true love for us can draw our hearts back to Him. This is reconciliation! This was most beautifully and perfectly done in and through the life of our Lord, our Saviour and dear Brother, Jesus Christ.

The life of Jesus clearly demonstrated *what God is like*. The death of Jesus demonstrated clearly *what we are like*. God is a life giver and nothing else. We are by nature life takers and nothing else. God lives in hope. We live in fear. God delights in mercy. We delight in condemnation: that's why we live in fear. As we judge so we expect to be judged. Remember the story of Cain.

We expect God to judge us because that's what **we** do; and we think God is like us (Psalm 50:21). Most people think that way, judging and condemning all the time. That's how most people live, and move, and act, and have their very being, thinking that God is judging and condemning and destroying all the time, when in reality we are living in the shadow of an idol of our own misunderstanding. And this just brings self-condemnation and condemnation of others: a slinging match that never finishes.

To break the cycle of our self-condemnation and fear of God, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to demonstrate His merciful character, His *everlasting* kindness and His most glorious grace. We don't need to fear God any more: the picture of God has been corrected. The misapprehension and misunderstanding has been removed: and thus the reconciliation process is completed in Christ.

When we understand that God's thoughts towards us are peace, and hope, and abundance of joy, we will respond to Him with a full submission of our lives to His plans. We will give Him our hearts for safe keeping, but only when we truly have been reconciled in our hearts. That's why Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of Faith ... that's why He is the Author and Finisher of *our* faith. Because it's through looking to Him that we understand God and recognise, finally, how much He loves us.

Hallelujah, because the description that God gave of Himself to Moses all those years ago about His character was proven to be correct. True? Do you believe it? In Jesus it's proven to be correct! God is "Merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6,7). That's God's attitude towards us.

The life of Christ showed us once and for all that God is not interested in a legal, appeasement-based reconciliation; where somebody has to die in order to pay off the debt of sin which God demanded to be paid – that until this death is accomplished, and God's anger appeased, He will not forgive. I mean really? It can't be the way! It's illogical really when you think about it!

Christ's life shows us that the Father is desperate for us to know His mercy, and His willingness to forgive our sin and restore our togetherness ... our ONENESS ... that's why that word "atonement" was developed.

The At-one-ment ... the bringing together of two parties to be one.

While we were yet sinners, while we yet had a completely false understanding of God's character, Christ died for us. How good is

that! How merciful is that! He died, not to pay off a debt which God demanded, but to show us that we are by nature hateful and condemning and unbelieving towards God's true character. Having shown us what we are like, He could then say, 'Did you notice that I still loved you? I still love you ... no matter what you did or do to me. I still love you ... I still love you!'

This is what they didn't understand in Heaven, at origin of Satan's rebellion. The angels must have questioned: How does God's love work? They didn't understand! Why had Lucifer left heaven? Did he have any legitimate reasons?

It's been a very complex process hasn't it, learning about God's agape love. It's been a complex process for us to come to understand ... to compare Scripture with Scripture, and to share our thoughts about them together, and to come up with this beautiful Gospel ... not come up with ... to *receive* this GLORIOUS GOSPEL. God has been waiting for thousands of years, hoping that humanity would reach out for the truth about His love. He's been pleading that we receive the truth about Him as revealed through His Son. Does anybody want it? ... Does anybody want to believe the truth about Him? It's going for free! Anybody? It's free! [...Waiting for us to receive this treasure...] to buy without money, without price. Yes, Christ died for us. God allowed this to happen. He did not demand it should happen.

The death of Christ once and for all showed us that our silly idea, that someone must die to pay for sins, is foreign to Him. God gave that which was most precious to Him so that we would never think to appease Him with anything again, because what could appease Him more than that which He Himself had given? He is pleading with us saying "can't you see? I am the one giving and giving; you have

nothing to give me and I don't need anything for our relationship to be healed!"

What have we recently learned about this idea? It's a pagan concept. Believing that someone had to die to pay God off because of His anger is a pagan concept. Appeasement is the foundation of paganism. It's really sad that we have held on to this pagan concept, and called it the gospel. Praise God for His abundant mercy and forgiveness!

What happened to Jesus three days after His death on the cross? Jesus was resurrected. Now think about it for a minute! If the punishment for sin is eternal separation from God through death, then Jesus failed to fulfil the sentence. Because He didn't die forever. People have been in comas longer than Jesus was dead ... so it could not have been the punishment ... it couldn't have been the penalty.

If the punishment for sin is the spilling of blood, then many people have spilled their blood throughout history and many have spilled blood for God. So would they not have paid their own penalty? But Christians will say, "no, it had to be divine blood ... it had to be *divine* blood to pay for the penalty of the *divine* law and that's why it is only Christ who could do it."

At this point atheists throw up their hands in dismay and cry out, "Your God is crazy! Your God demands the death of His own Son before He will forgive others? That's one hard head!" And I have studied with an atheist who has expressed these thoughts exactly. He could never, ever accept that kind of a God ... But now he has a beautiful relationship with Him because of the EVERLASTING Gospel, not the appeasement of the bloodthirsty God gospel.

Congregation: Amen.

It wasn't the death of His Son that was required to pay for our sins. God simply wants to forgive us. He wants us to acknowledge what we are like – Confess. "If we can confess our sins..." What does the Bible say? "...He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) That's all He wants! For us to humble ourselves, to acknowledge our sin, and come humbly before Him.

God simply wants to forgive us, but we keep setting up conditions which we think He requires to forgive us. Isn't that crazy? And we do that because that's how we deal with each other, and so we think it's logical that that's how God must deal with us. No!

So, just recapping before I go into the final part of the talk:

1. Because sin separated us from God in the Garden of Eden, and our misunderstanding caused us to run from Him, God became very, very sad or grieved. So a process of reconciliation had to be put into place. The Everlasting Gospel began in the garden of Eden.
2. All communication with humanity from that point was through His Son, who would speak to Adam and Eve in the garden, and then through the Patriarchs and the prophets down through time, as they permitted Him to come close to them. He would lay out the plan of salvation, but it wasn't always clearly understood.
3. God asked Moses to make a sanctuary so that God could dwell among them ... to be close to them, His children. His

Shekinah would reveal when His Presence was with them. Sadly of course we know this had its limitations. Men still went looking for other gods to worship which acted more like us.

4. So God sent His only begotten Son: and God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself in every beautiful act, in every touch and healing of somebody; the breaking of the bread and the fish and the feeding of people; every touch, the touching of the lepers and the washing of the disciples feet on that last night; the breaking of bread and the cup of wine; every beautiful little act was done with dignity and grace, and was a reflection of the Father's glorious character. But sadly, the majority rejected Him. "He came to His own," John recalls, "and His own received Him not." (John 1:11) In rejecting Christ, they rejected the Father again.

Knowing His Father's love for us, and the true way of salvation, Jesus outlined succinctly the requirements for reconciliation between us and His Father. Those who would receive His word and trust His promise, that God loved them, would be restored to fellowship with the Father, and with Christ Himself.

Jesus said in John 14:23 – "If a man love Me, he will keep My words (which are the words of the Father): and My Father will love him, and **We** will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Isn't that a beautiful promise! The reconciliation will take place.

And John picks up that thought again in his own epistle, in the 1 John 1: 3-4. "That which we have seen, which we have heard (in verse 1 and 2 talks about how our hands have touched and have handled

the Word of life), that we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us (what's fellowship? It's a coming together, it's a oneness, it's a nearness, it's a joining of people): that you may also have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Is that how it is for us? Is that what we are offering to people? Come fellowship with us ... truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son. What more could you want?

The very things that Jesus promised are the very things John confirmed he was experiencing with his fellow believers. Yes, that's what we have experienced too ... and I am happy to come in line with that kind of fellowship, with that kind of relationship, with that kind of reconciliation ... And not depending on somebody else to fulfil a role, and I have mentioned this before, to fulfil a role that Jesus and His Father can no longer fulfil because They are still separated from us. Reconciliation means nothing if reconciliation means They are still out there and somebody else has to take Their place.

I love the fellowship that John records! Fellowship with the Father and His Son!

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be..." half filled? ... No! ... "Full." You can have fullness of joy with the Father and His Son, according to the scriptures.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, to them that believe on His name:" [\(John 1:12\)](#)

The seal of their sonship was the Presence of the Spirit of His Son: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6)

So when we believe that God so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son, and when we believe that God so loved us that He sent the Spirit of His only begotten Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father, and when we believe that we truly have fellowship with the Father and His Son, as promised by Jesus and confirmed by John and experienced by him, then we can know for certain that the process of reconciliation has been completed which God put into place in the Garden of Eden 6000 years ago, longing for its fulfilment ... and which is available to us today.

Today these words are fulfilled in your hearing. God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, has made Himself available for a beautiful relationship with you, and with me, and with anybody else out there who would claim His promise, take hold of it, and grasp it, yes, with anyone who desires it. In this beautiful relationship, God wants to dwell in our hearts, together with His Son, through His personal Presence called the Holy Spirit.

Now, God was in the Sanctuary and didn't get around much. Then He was in Jesus, and He was able to get around Jerusalem and all the surrounding areas, including some gentile areas. But now the promise is extended to Australia, New Zealand, Asia, America, Africa and everywhere where there is a believer who wants fellowship with the Father and the Son. Through the reconciliation process, the Father is able to be present personally with us. Then how far can the Father spread around now? How many of His children has He the potential to fellowship with now?

Congregation: All!

All ... through His Holy Spirit. See the process of reconciliation spreading out ... God's will has been fulfilled! In the sanctuary, God was able to be *among* them. In Christ, He was able to be *with* them. And now, through the Holy Spirit, He is able to be *in* us. Truly the reconciliation is complete! We have been reconciled with our Heavenly Father. Alleluia.

Unclean things separate us from God

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,' saith the Lord, 'and touch not the **unclean thing**;' and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters,' saith the Lord Almighty.

What is the **unclean thing** that separates us from God? Is it a piece of wood elaborately carved or a bit of clay that is moulded into a particular shape of some image? Is that the unclean thing that is going to separate us from God? Is it a particular piece of food that is not so good for our bodies? Is that the unclean thing that will separate us from God? Is it an alcoholic drink, having a negative effect on the mind and judgement? How about a place where bad people attend and do bad things? Perhaps all of these things are unclean things, and they can separate us from God, but what is the REAL UNCLEAN THING that separates us from God?

Congregation: The Babylonian garment.

Babylonian garment!

Congregation: Mistaken identity.

Perhaps the real unclean thing that separates us from God is the misunderstanding and misrepresentation we have of our heavenly Father: misjudging God by making Him out to be an angry, vindictive, vengeful, hateful and angry God, which isn't what He is! Maybe this is the unclean thought which is separating us from God? From this unclean understanding of God comes all the unclean actions and thoughts towards God; and the lack of connection renders our obedience hopeless. This wrong image of God has put up an unclean barrier to our hearts.

Let Him remove it by the revelation of His love found in His Son, Jesus Christ. And let Him receive you as you stop running away from Him.

If you let Him back into your heart, as is His desire, He will once again, with your permission, be a Father to you, and we shall be His sons and daughters.

Draw nigh to God and what does He automatically do?

Congregation: Draw nigh to us.

Yes, He draws nigh to us! (James 4:8) That's what He's always wanted. But He waits for us to respond to His Spirit. This has been His plan and desire all along ... that we would let Him in.

When this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, as a witness to all nations, then the end will come. Then the invisible walk we are having with God now will give way to that visible walk

with God when Jesus returns and takes us home to His Father's house, where the mansions are prepared and waiting for us ... waiting for a long time.

Is your desire to be with Him where He is?

Is your desire to be where He is?

Congregation: Yes!

Then let Him be where He wants to be right now!

Congregation: Amen!

Let Him be where He wants to be right now. That is reconciliation ... to be very near to you: in fact, in your heart ... that is His desire. Soon, and very soon we shall be restored to our heavenly home to never part again.

Let's take this good news into all our world, and let's let people know that their heavenly Father doesn't have bad intentions towards them. Let the people know that He is longing to be reconciled to them and take up a place in their hearts as well, and to give them an expected end ... a positive end ... a beautiful end. The world needs some good news right now, does it not?

Congregation: Yes!

Let us be the ones who give it. Let's take it and let's share what we have experienced ... what we have seen, and heard, and felt, and touched with our own hands and handled.

God bless us as we share, not only what we know, but what we have experienced and are continuing to experience with our Father, and

with His Son, with all the people around the world. Let's let them know that there is a God in Israel who is longing to send His Son to take us back home to be with Him. Amen!

Congregation: Amen!

Let us pray: Our gracious Father, we thank you for the clarity of the message of the Scriptures, that it is not You that has put up a barrier to us, but it is we that have put up a barrier to You. Forgive us, Father, for this. Forgive us for not understanding You, for imagining you to be something totally wrong.

We thank You that You have chased after us. You sent Jesus into the world to come and seek and save that which is lost. You were in Him reconciling the world to Yourself. You have given us the Word of reconciliation; You have given us Yourself, Your Spirit, to dwell in us, to do Your good work in us.

Father as we go from this camp, this evening or tomorrow, as we separate, our hearts will be sad because we love each other here; we enjoy each other's company, the fellowship, the fullness of joy, and yet, we must go. There is work to do in various places, and I pray Your blessing will go with each head that is bowed here, with each person and family that is watching online. Father, bless them with the assurance that God loves them no matter what and we can stop beating ourselves up with self-judgement and condemnation, because Your Judgement is final, and You will give us what we desire.

Father, I pray that Your desires will be our desires. That Your forgiveness and willingness to forgive will be reflected in our willingness to say sorry and turn from our sins, that You will

complete Your good work so the life of Christ and the mind of Christ becomes ours.

Father I thank You again for all the messages of this week, the beautiful messages that have come from the front here. We thank you that we can record them and put them up online for people to watch, because if our voices are silenced, Your word will continue on.

Bless Your word, the Bible, in every corner of this globe. Where people read it, may they perceive the Truth as it is in Christ, that Your work, and the glory of God among all nations, can be completed and the end can come. I thank You Lord for hearing this prayer, and for this time together in Jesus' name ... Amen.

An evening sitting around a campfire sounds great. But what if someone is there you don't like? Those few hours could be very uncomfortable for all involved.

Now imagine being invited to spend eternity around God's campfire in Heaven. But you've heard so many bad things about Him... Why should you want to spend eternity with someone so controlling and so angry, someone you don't like? Well, that's your conclusion about God from what you've heard from Christians and non-Christians alike.

But what if we've all been tricked? What if He isn't the controlling bully people have made Him out to be? What if He really is a Father who actually just wants the best for His children, and wants to be close to them? How can He change our misperceptions and put within us a longing to be at home with 'Dad'? Watch as our Heavenly Father attempts to set things right for us, hoping we will change our mind about Him. He's never changed His mind about us.
