

VOYAGING INTO GOD'S GOODNESS

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INTRODUCTION

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Ps. 34:8

This teaching will enable you to taste the Lord's goodness in a new and wonderful way. If you will stay on board this voyage into God's goodness until it ends, you will see clearly in your mind's eye what all of us know deep down in our spirits.

First, God does no evil. He does not afflict men with sickness, natural disaster, oppression, poverty or destruction. Nor does God allow evil in any active or direct sense. God is only light, love and abundant life. Second, all afflictions (sickness, disaster, oppression, poverty and death) come from man's sowing and reaping and/or Satan's demonic destructions - - no exceptions. Third, Jesus came to elevate our Old Testament view of God as a stern judge into the New Testament view of God as a loving Abba-Father. Fourth, we are responsible as the body of Christ to minister the Gospel (the good news of a good God) to a fallen world.

Becoming fully persuaded as to God's goodness will take your faith to new highs of boldness, your love for Jesus to new depths of passion, and your hatred of evil to new levels of intensity. Through this most challenging topic, keep two things in mind. First, test the spirit of this teaching. It may offend some minds, but it will not offend the spirit of a man who is joined to God's spirit. Want this to be true - - that God is good and in Him is no darkness. God will show you the truth through your spirit bearing witness with the truths as they are presented. Second, as you voyage through this teaching, keep your eyes focused on Jesus as revealed in the Gospels. He came to reveal the Father's heart toward men (Jn. 1:18). If you can't imagine Jesus afflicting men with evil (sickness, destruction, disaster, death and defeat), then don't believe the Heavenly Father does it either.

Many Christians today struggle with a "Jekyll and Hyde" image of God. This schizophrenic view of God tells us the same Jesus who loves us today may kill us, maim us or put sickness on us and our children tomorrow. This spiritual schizophrenia has made many believers double-minded, unstable in all their ways and unable to receive anything from the Lord.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. . . .Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Jas. 1:6-8,13,16-17.

The purpose of this teaching is to purge out all double-minded notions that God may be good, yet He does evil or actively allows it. Knowing the absolute goodness of God allows us to responsibly, faithfully, accurately and lovingly imitate His true character. In the process, Satan is evicted and evicted and evicted from every corner of our lives. This is a glorious concept not too good to be true. Now, let the voyage begin!

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And it came to pass, when the time was come that he [Jesus] should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. **And they did not receive him**, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples **James** and **John** saw this, they said, **Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?** But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.** And they went to another village. Lu. 9:51-56

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, **An enemy hath done this.** Matt. 13:24-28

No evil ever came from [God's] hands. . . . Let this truth be fixed in our hearts . . . whenever we are troubled with the thorn or the thistle, with the poisonous or useless weed, with the noxious beast . . . or with any of the other countless inconveniences and pains of our present condition; whenever we feel ready to faint by reason of fighting without and fears within, let us remember that God made all things good, and avoiding hard thoughts of Him, say, **An enemy hath done this.**

G. H. Pember, Earth's Earliest Ages.

I. **The Anointing of Goodness and Power: God is great, God is good.**

- A. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: **who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil**; for God was with him. Acts 10:38. (Jesus heals, Satan oppresses!)
- B. The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Jn. 10:10. (Satan only operates in forms of deceit, death and destruction; God only operates in forms of life – the giving of it, the renewing of it, and the preservation of it.)
- C. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted (peirazo: to test, entice, discipline, prove, tempt, try. Strong's #3985), **no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone**; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.** Every good and perfect gift

is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jas. 1:12-17. (Satan's only tool is evil; God's only tool is good. Man's own evil desire "conceives" with Satan "the tempter" (Matt. 4:3) and sin is birthed. We must not be deceived on this point.)

- D. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10:13. (God is not in the temptation business. God is in the protection and rescue business. He doesn't allow any evil on His part. He is trying to stop our self-destructive conduct by providing rescues and ways of escape. Blaming God for allowing evil is like blaming the same fireman who bravely rescues us for also starting the fire itself.)
- E. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Lk. 11:11-13. (Abba-Father doesn't give us anything that will harm us; He only gives us good gifts.)
- F. Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**. Rom. 12:21. (We overcome evil by walking in the goodness of God.)
- G. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that **good**, and acceptable, and **perfect**, will of God. Rom. 12:2. (Only a mind renewed to the goodness of God can "prove" God's perfect will.)
- H. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 Jn. 3:8. (Satan and man co-create all sin; it's always been that way; Jesus came to stop it.)
- I. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy

ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation. Ps. 91. (Abiding in the secret place of the Almighty provides perfect protection and long life. Either this protective Psalm is potentially available to all of us all the time, or it is useless. If it is only occasionally available to us, then we have no assurance or confidence that we will survive the day. We might as well eat and drink, for tomorrow we might or might not be killed by Satan's attacks of sickness, destruction and death.)

- J. "A serious misunderstanding that distorts Christian faith and turns people from it is their confusion concerning the direction of the work of Christ. This produces a host of what George Macdonald called 'mean theologies' and asks us to believe that God behaves in ways that are not worthy of Him. Our mistake is to think that everything Jesus sought to accomplish was directed towards God in an attempt to placate His wrath, or to argue Him into kindness, or to convince Him that we are not as bad as He thinks we are. Jesus is for us, but God is against us. God is so righteous and just, and so easily offended, that we cannot enjoy His approval. He must be won from hostility to mercy, and it is the work of Jesus to accomplish it. To believe this is to set Christian faith on its head. It is to distort the most essential truth of it, namely that the work of Jesus is God's work. The purpose of Jesus was not to persuade God to be gracious, but to show us how gracious God is; not to overcome God's enmity, but to save us from our guilt, fear, and distrust; not to win God over, but to persuade us that if we ever thought He was against us, we were mistaken."

Maurice Boyd.

- K. "It is quite clear that the whole teaching of Jesus Christ about God, expressed alike in His words and in the whole fashion and mold of His character, implies that God is always nearer, mightier, more loving, and more free to help every one of us than any one of us ever realizes. This alone is what makes His incessant summons to faith, and to more faith, coherent and reasonable. This again seems to me to imply that mankind is generally under a hypnotic spell about God, which is always contracting and chilling their thoughts of Him and leading to all kinds of depressing and terrifying illusions about Him."

D.S. Cairns. ("Your God is my Satan." John Wesley responding to mean-spirited theologies.)

- L. "This much is true even if we choose to speak of God 'permitting' certain events as opposed to God 'willing' certain events. As H. Blocher (following Calvin) argues, if God exercises meticulous control over the world, then even what he 'allows' must serve a particular divine purpose. Thus the classic distinction between what God 'wills' and what God 'permits' amounts to very little.

See Blocher, *Evil and the Cross*, trans. D.G. Preston (Downers Grove, III,: InterVarsity press, 1994), pp. 96-97." Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War*, p. 301.

- M. "If indeed the world is presently plagued by a menacing force mighty enough to be called the 'prince' and even 'god' of this age as well as the 'principality and power' of the world's spiritual realm (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2), and if indeed this being exercises a significant influence over the whole world (1 Jn. 5:19; cf. Acts 26:18; Rev. 12:9), then we should not be surprised to find that the 'natural' order under his influence exhibits diabolic qualities. A creation that is under the strong influence of a cosmic 'roaring lion' (1 Pet. 5:8) is going to become 'red in tooth and claw.' When a 'cosmic Herod' exercises power over the Bethlehem of God's 'natural' order, a perpetual 'slaughter of the innocents' can be expected."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 291.

- N. "If nature seems like a war zone that is significantly occupied and run by hostile agents, it is because it is a war zone and is significantly controlled by such agents. This, I submit, is the perspective that best explains the viciousness of nature and the perspective most consistent with the perspective of Jesus and the New Testament. As we have seen, Jesus never attributed genetic mutations, deformities, blindness, deafness, leprosy, blood diseases, fevers, falling towers, barren trees, life-threatening storms or death itself to God's providence or to 'natural' features of his Father's creation. He consistently identified them as evidence of the reign of the kingdom of darkness here on earth, a kingdom that his whole ministry was intended to destroy."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 292.

- O. "In one of Jesus' parables, a farmer discovered that weeds were growing in his field alongside of the crop he had planted. Since he did not plant the

weeds, he concluded, '**An enemy has done this**' (Mt. 13:28). We should cultivate a similar critical discernment regarding the 'field' of the Lord's creation. The mudslide that buries a schoolroom full of children alive; the deadly tornado that snuffs out the lives of young children as they enact an Easter pageant; the disease that slowly incapacitates the minds of three beautiful siblings, thereby crushing the spirits of their parents; the tempest that drowns a boat full of immigrants seeking freedom; the hurricane that kills ten thousand people and leaves thousands more homeless – such 'natural' phenomena cannot be regarded as 'natural' in a world created and governed by an all-powerful, beneficent Creator. This is not the kind of 'seed' that the all-loving God sows. We should in each instance conclude, '**An enemy has done this.**' Such evils have the same moral quality as the abduction and rape of a young child. While there are a number of variables that must be considered for a comprehensive understanding of such terrible occurrences, their ultimate explanation must lie in the volition of evil agents who abuse their God-given authority. In short, Satan and his legions are directly or indirectly behind all forms of 'natural' evil. Satan turns the neutral medium of the natural order into a weapon just as human agents sometimes use rocks, sticks, or water as weapons when they choose to do so. This conclusion is the only one entirely consistent with the Bible and the only one that adequately accounts for all the data in need of explanation. It takes seriously the fact that Jesus always considered 'natural' infirmities and diseases as directly or indirectly the work of Satan's kingdom. It also squares well with the fact that Jesus treated a life-threatening storm the way he treated demons: he 'rebuked' it."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, pp. 317-318.

- P. "The origin of all sin is found in the mistrust of God's character." Oswald Chambers. Suspicion of God's character on any level, conscious or subconscious, robs us of our faith, bars our sanctification, and hinders our intimacy with the Father. We are called to fall in love with God's character and beauty. We must resolve that Jesus is the Father's heart. We must not turn to the left or to the right on this issue. No maybes, no exceptions. We must not look at the world or our own experiences to define God. If we make this mistake, we can't help but impugn God's character. At the root of all sin and dysfunction is a wrong perception of God's character (goodness). Satan tempted Adam and Eve on this very point by questioning God's character. He does the same to us today. This teaching on God's goodness will enable us to fight this battle to win.

II. Blessed Question Number One: Does God allow evil?

- A. Understanding the goodness of God comes from asking the right questions in the right way.
- B. "There are no right answers to wrong questions." Richard Wurmbrand.
- C. The angle of the question determines the angle of the answer. Where and how we start determine where and how we finish. For example, the angle the Earth is tilted toward the Sun determines the seasons rather than the nearness to the Sun. If we ask our questions from an angle of unbelief, our answer received will be one justifying unbelief.
- D. Unblessed questions: "Do you use a bat to beat your wives? Yes or No?" This is unblessed because it presumes wrongdoing on the part of the respondent. If he answers yes, he is certainly evil. If no, he still has admitted that he beats his wives without a bat, and also that he is guilty of polygamy. We must avoid accusatory questions. To ask, "Why does God allow evil?" presumes that He does allow it. The blessed open-hearted way of asking about this topic is as follows: "Does God allow evil?"

1. Unblessed questions blameshift to God and others.

Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, **the putting forth of the finger**, and speaking vanity. Is. 58:9.

2. Unblessed questions attribute evil to God.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Is. 5:20.

3. Unblessed questions deny or dilute self-responsibility of the asker (ignores mankind's free will\dominion responsibility of Gen. 1:26-31; 2:19-25; Deut. 30:19-20; Ps. 115:16).

4. Unblessed questions foster an atmosphere of fear, doubt, shame, blame and helplessness (bastard mind set of Heb. 12:1-13).

5. Unblessed questions create a welfare mentality of entitlement (Heb. 6:10-12). (For example: "Everything is the Government's (God's) fault and doing. The Government (God) owes me a living and everything bad that happens comes from the Government's (God's)

failure to run the country (creation) properly.”)

6. Examples:

- a. Adam blamed Eve and God, while Eve blamed Satan, all the result of Satan asking Eve unblessed questions (Gen 3:1-13). Today we use the same pattern: Satan steals, kills and destroys; we succumb or watch helplessly; we then blame God (always) or other men (usually) or Satan (rarely); all the while never taking responsibility ourselves.
- b. Aaron blamed the people for his own actions in creating the Golden Calf (Ex 32:21-24).
- c. Saul blamed the people, Samuel and the Philistines for his own disobedience (1 Sam 13:11-14; 1 Sam 15:19-24).

7. End result is that we make ourselves the center of the universe. Like self-centered children, we make ourselves the constant and God's goodness the variable, rather than God's goodness the constant and men the variable. We must revolve around God, not God around us. Our orbit is the issue, not His gravity. When we leave God's orbit, we leave His protection (Heb. 13:8).

E. Fruitless versus fruitful questions:

1. Examples of fruitless and unblessed questions:

- a. What was God trying to tell or teach us when He destroyed the Twin Towers?
- b. Why did God allow the Twin Towers to be destroyed?
- c. Where was God on September 11?
- d. Bottom line problem: all the above questions suggest God was responsible either by actively doing it or by choosing not to stop it or by being too passive, indecisive and uncaring to stop it.

2. Why is it unblessed to ask, "Why does God allow evil to happen?"
- a. The question, "Why does God allow evil?" wrongly presumes that everything that happens is God's will.
- (1) Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:10 , "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." We are commanded to pray for God's will to "come" and "be done" on earth "as it is in heaven" because of this obvious reason: God's will is not currently being done on earth. If God's will was already being done on the earth, we certainly would not need to pray for it.
- (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Rom. 12:2. This verse tells us we have to be "transformed" by "the renewing of . . . [the] mind," then and only then are we empowered to "prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." If, however, we are "conformed to this world," we will not be able to "prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Thus, God's will is not established on this earth until we are able to release it by praying, speaking and acting by faith: "It seems that God is limited by our prayer [faith] life. He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him [in faith]." John Wesley.
- (3) God being omnipotent (all-powerful) does not mean God is omni-causative (all-controlling). Jas. 1:12-17. God created freewill in a free creation so that love could be freely chosen. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is "not **willing** that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet, we know that many will not repent and will suffer "the second death." Rev. 21:7-8. Thus, God never wills evil, but the freewill of men and angels sure do.
- b. The question, "Why does God allow evil?" wrongly presumes God has not already done everything He could to stop evil short of violating freewills.

- (1) If God violates any of our freewills at any time, He aborts all of us from being true men into being true robotic puppet-slaves.

. . . [T]hou hast **magnified thy word above all thy name.**
Ps. 138:2.

The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but **the earth hath he given to the children of men.** Ps. 115:16.

And [God] hath given him [Jesus] authority to execute judgment also, because he is **the Son of man.** Jn. 5:27.

Do ye not know that **the saints shall judge the world?** and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that **we shall judge angels?** how much more things that pertain to this life? 1 Cor. 6:2-3.

But one in a certain place testified, saying, **What is man,** that thou art mindful of him? **or the son of man,** that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; **thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.** For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb. 2:6-9.

- (2) God has already done the maximum to prevent evil without violating the freewill of man. Jesus Christ is the full provision of God to man to enable us to overcome all evil.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Jn. 16:7-11.

- (a) Jesus Christ stands at the door of our freewill and knocks. He never kicks the door in. We

must open it and invite Him in. When His presence fills the situation, all evil will be vanquished: sickness will be healed, demons cast out, oppression defeated, wars averted, destruction diverted and death defeated.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. **Rev. 3:20.**

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **Lk. 10:19.**

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. **Jn. 5:25-27.**

The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. **Ps. 115:16.**

Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD. **Ps. 149:5-9.**

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. **Jn. 14:12-14. Also see Mk. 11:23-26.**

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? **1 Cor. 6:2-3.**

- (b) Jesus Christ provides us all things for life and Godliness as we partake of His divine nature. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 2 Pet. 1:3-4.
- (c) To believe that God can lawfully do any more than He has already done to stop any evil event is to say that Jesus' sacrifice at the cross was not enough! This tramples the blood of Jesus underfoot by saying it has insufficient power to vanquish all evil. (Heb. 10:29; Rev. 12:11).
- c. The question, "Why does God allow evil?" wrongly omits the freewills of man and Satan as the true causes of evil.
- (1) Man's evil desire conceives with Satan's temptations and births sin and death. (Jas. 1:12-17; 1 Jn. 3:8).
- (2) Satan and/or man "allow" evil, not God. (1 Jn. 5:19; Ps. 115:16; Dt. 30:19-20).
- d. The question, "Why does God allow evil?" wrongly puts moral guilt on God for standing by and doing nothing.
- (1) We hold men who "allow evil" (i.e. don't block or stop evil when they have the chance, like a passerby who won't help stop a mugging) as morally but not legally responsible. A passerby who refuses to stop a crime he sees occurring cannot be charged criminally with any wrongdoing, but his actions will bring severe moral wrath and disgust from all who hear of it. Such men would be outcasts and labeled evil. The law calls those who affirmatively commit illegal acts guilty of "malfeasance" and are thus liable to be charged criminally. The law calls those who refuse to act to stop some illegal activity guilty of "non-feasance" and are not criminally liable but are morally culpable.

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetuate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really co-operating with it.

Martin Luther King, Jr. p 97, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

- (2) We must not treat God the same way. We do this whenever we say, **"God allows evil for some hidden reason of His, but that's okay because He is God after all and He can do whatever He pleases - - it's His world."** **Wrong, wrong, wrong!** This is not just saying God has the legal right to allow evil ("it's His world"), but it's also saying God is morally responsible for evil ("God allows evil for some hidden reason of His"). This equates God with the witness who won't help a nearby mugging victim. Though it's not illegal to allow such evil to happen without helping out, it is by any standard of decency completely evil, dastardly and cowardly not to help out perishing people whenever possible. No, God has done all that He can do to stem the tide of all evil events. He gave us His only begotten son to live within us and empower us to take dominion over all evil in the earth.
- e. The question, "Why does God allow evil?" wrongly blames God by presuming that He has somehow put His stamp of approval on the evil event. Why not ask: why did God allow Eve to eat the apple, Cain to slay Abel, Pharaoh to slay Israel's firstborn, Tamar to be raped, the Holocaust to happen, children to die? This type of question never yields any spiritual truth. It just blameshifts evil from man and Satan to God.
- f. The only sense in which God is involved in the allowance of evil is that He disallows Satan's temptations to rise above our ability to overcome them (1 Cor. 10:13). However, God does not create, aid or abet in any temptation. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from

above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Jas. 1:12-17. Let no one ask, "Why does God allow evil?" It is truly an unblessed question.

g. Implications of this type of unblessed question result in unscriptural beliefs:

- (1) Whatever happens is God's will (Lk. 11:2).
- (2) God gives us evil to teach us (Lk. 11:11-13).
- (3) God is a murderer (Jn. 10:10).
- (4) God is indifferent and uncaring (1 Jn. 4:8).
- (5) God is angry at us (Lk. 2:14; Jn. 3:16).
- (6) God is the author of evil (Jas. 1:13-17).
- (7) We are helpless to stop disasters (Mk. 11:23-24; Rom. 8:35-39).
- (8) Our lives may be snuffed out by God at any moment (Ps. 91).

h. Our Abba-Father is not a child abuser!

i. The major problem with rightly understanding God's goodness comes from the Augustinian/Calvinistic School of "Blueprint Theology" which arose in the Fourth Century and continues to this day. All unblessed questions concerning God's goodness stem from this unblessed angle of thought. "[A] classic expression of this traditional perspective came from the sixteenth-century monk Brother Lawrence, who wrote:

God knows best what we need and everything He does is for our good. If we knew how much He loves us, we would always be ready to receive from Him, without equanimity, the sweet and the bitter, and even the most painful and most difficult things would be pleasing and agreeable . . . **when we believe that it is the hand of God acting on us, that it is a Father filled with love who subjects us to this humiliation, grief and suffering** then all bitterness . . . is forgotten and we rejoice in them. We must believe unquestioningly that . . . it is pleasing to God to sacrifice

ourselves to Him, that it is **by His divine Providence** that **we are abandoned** to all kinds of conditions, **to suffer all kinds of sufferings, miseries and temptations.**

I call this understanding of God's relationship to the world of the 'blueprint world view,' for it assumes that everything somehow fits into 'God's secret plan' - a divine blueprint. The view takes many different forms, some saying, for example, that God ordains all things, others that he simply allows tragic events to occur. But each shares the assumption that, whether ordained or allowed, there is a specific divine reason for every occurrence in history. If God wanted to prevent the event from taking place, the reasoning goes, he could have prevented it. Since he did not, he must have had a good reason for not doing so.

As traditional and popular as the blueprint world view is, it is not without significant difficulties. For one thing, this view makes it exceedingly difficult to reconcile the evil in our world with the omnipotence and perfect goodness of God. It is not easy to believe - and for some of us, not possible to believe - that there is a specific providential purpose being served by certain horrifying experiences.

For example, dozens of small children were recently buried alive by a mudslide in Mexico. Can we conceive of a specific reason why God might have deemed it better to allow this tragedy than to prevent it? To cite another example, several years ago a young girl was abducted from her own yard in a rural town in Minnesota. Her parents now live in a perpetual nightmare, wondering every day if their daughter is alive and, if she is, what is being done to her. Can we theorize a possible 'good' providential reason why God might have thought it better to allow this nightmare rather than to prevent it? Is it possible to accept the advice of Augustine, Calvin and Brother Lawrence and encourage these parents to accept this nightmare as coming from their loving Father's hand?

To some of us, the suggestion that God has a 'higher reason' for allowing children to suffocate in mud or be kidnaped is insulting to those who experience the horror as well as to the character of God. Indeed, on the assumption that believing in God means accepting a 'higher harmony' in which horrifying

events somehow fit, some have abandoned belief in God altogether. Like Ivan in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, these people abandon belief in God on moral grounds. 'I renounce the higher harmony altogether,' Ivan announces. 'It's not worth the tears of . . . one tortured child.' Any design that intentionally includes the suffering of innocent children for a 'greater purpose' is intrinsically immoral, he argues, and we are obliged to renounce it."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, pp. 13-14.

"Suppose a man falls among thieves, or wild beasts. . . . Suppose another man wandering through the desert finds help in his straits. . . . Carnal reason ascribes all such happenings, whether prosperous or adverse, to fortune. But anyone who has been taught by Christ's lips . . . will look farther afield for a cause, and will consider that all events are governed by God's secret plan." John Calvin.

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 13.

"In their very act of [wicked people] going against [God's] . . . will,' Augustine holds, 'his will is thereby accomplished . . . for it would not be done without his allowing it - and surely his permission is not unwilling, but willing.'"

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 12.

"According to Augustine, the victim 'ought not to attribute [his suffering] to the will of men, or of angels, or of any created spirit, but rather to His will who gives power to wills' (*City of God* 5.10 [NPNF1 2:93]). Even the premature death of little children fulfills a divine purpose, according to Augustine. When parents experience 'the suffering and death of their little ones so dear to them,' he suggests, God is disciplining the parents ('*The Free Choice of the Will*,' FC 59)."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 12.

The above three quotes from Calvin and Augustine are included to show what "mean" theologies ultimately lead to: blaming God for evil. Note that in Mk. 6:1-6 Jesus came home to Nazareth "and He could do there no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief." v. 5-6. Jesus did not say that it was God's will that no mighty work be done, but rather it was due to their corporate unbelief. If Jesus had followed the "blueprint model," then He would have praised His

heavenly father for willing that no mighty works be done. That could not be farther from the truth. God's mighty works are always prevented or hindered by man's unbelief and/or Satan's schemes. For God's part, He is always willing to display His power as faith is sown in a situation

3. Examples of fruitful and blessed questions:
 - a. How was Satan able to execute this attack?
 - b. What have we done to lose God's protection?
 - c. What seeds have we sown to allow this invasion?
 - d. What things have we failed to do to bolster our spiritual shields?
 - e. What is God saying now about how we can recover this lost ground?
 - f. **Right questions produce right answers and foster an atmosphere of courage, trust and responsibility.**

III. **Blessed Question Number Two: Why did Jesus come to us? (Heb. 12:2).**

- A. Jesus came to provide forgiveness of sins for us through the shedding of His blood. (1 Jn. 1:7; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:22-10:22).
- B. Jesus came to give us His spirit to indwell us so that we can have the same relationship with the Abba-Father that He has. (Jn. 14:16-21; 17:20-26).
- C. Jesus came to reveal the father's heart toward us so that we would desperately want to have His same relationship with the Father. (Jn. 14:21,23).
- D. Jesus came to reveal Satan's system of operations:
 1. Jesus called Satan the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
 2. Jesus distinguished his ministry from Satan's as the plumb line of the New Testament:

The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Jn. 10:10.

3. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. (1 Jn. 3:8; Heb. 2:14-18).
4. The whole world is in Satan's power. (1 Jn. 5:19).
5. Satan's method is accusation. (Rev. 12:10).
 - a. Consider Adam and Jesus in wilderness and Job in the heavenly courts: all accused by Satan, but only Jesus remained uncursed by Satan. (Gen 3; Lk 4; Job 1 & 2).
 - b. Satan accuses in areas of weakness by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. (Eph. 4:27; 1 Jn. 2:16).
 - c. We succumb to sin and death. Sin is relational. Whatever is not from faith in God is sin to God. (Rom. 14:23; 1 Jn. 5:17).
 - d. Satan found no place of accusation in Jesus, so Satan couldn't take his life, but Jesus could and did lay it down. (Jn. 10:17-18; 14:30).
6. Timeline: God gave Adam dominion (Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 82:1-8; Mk. 12:1-9; Titus 1:2; Ps. 115:16); Adam forfeited dominion to Satan (Gen. 3; Lk. 4:5-6; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4; Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-18; Rev. 12:10; 2 Tim. 2:24-26); Jesus came as the Son of Man and took dominion from Satan (Jn. 5:27; 1 Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:15; Jn. 10:10; 16:11; 18:36); Jesus gives it back to us through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:17-23; Rom. 16:20; Heb. 10:12-13; Eph. 6:10-17). Jesus is waiting until all the enemies of God are brought under foot. (Heb. 2:6-9; 1 Cor. 15:21-28).
7. Consider the two trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of the tree of life gave one eternal life (Gen. 3:22). The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the tree of life personified (Jn. 15:1-16; Rev. 22:1-3). Jesus Christ is the sole source of eternal life (Jn. 3:15; 6:68-69; 10:27-28). Jesus Christ is eternal life (Jn. 14:6). To live off this tree

is to live by the faith of Jesus which indwells the righteous. No longer do we live by our own works, our own faith, our own efforts, our own abilities and our own righteousness. He who lives off the tree of life abides in the Sabbath rest of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Heb. 4:10. In contrast, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the tree of sin and death. (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 8:1-4). It is the tree of self-righteousness, of works righteousness, of man's righteousness, of the letter of the law, of shame and of blame. It is the tree of death because living off its fruit produces an existence voluntarily separated from God's righteousness and love. This tree only produces evil fruit when man freely chooses it.

It is necessary whenever freedom truly exists for there to be both a tree of life and a tree of knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life represents obedience and blessing. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents disobedience and cursing. It is not the tree itself which is bad, but it is the choosing of the tree in wilful violation of God's word which is bad. It is not the tree of good and evil, but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To know about something is to be given facts sufficient to make an informed choice based on informed consequences. Adam made an informed choice (disobeying God's word) with an informed consequence (death). God told Adam that the consequence of disobedience would be death - - a state of alienation and self-exile from the life of God. God created the man with the gift of freewill to "freely eat" (Gen. 2:16) of any tree. Yet, God warned Adam that choosing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would have a consequence - - death. Again, God did not create evil, but God did create freewill. Freewill necessarily creates two trees of opportunity - - life and death. Man and Satan co-create cursing when man chooses to live disobediently off of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man and God co-create blessing when man chooses to live obediently off of the tree of life. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, **that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:** That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Dt. 30:19-20.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the tree of the law) produces cursed fruit. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by

the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: Gal. 3:10-13. Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified on this cursed tree of the law so that we could be redeemed back to the blessed tree of the spirit - - the tree of eternal life found only in Christ Jesus. The tree of the law produces the following: works righteousness (not the righteousness of faith); the letter of the law which kills faith (not the spirit which gives faith); the ministration of death (not the ministration of life); the ministration of condemnation (not the ministration of forgiveness); the cursings of the law (not the blessings of the spirit); the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law (not the blessing of faith is the spirit and the strength of the spirit is love); abounding of sin (not the abounding of grace); and the knowledge of sin (not the knowledge of God). 2 Cor. 3:13-18; Gal. 3:1-14; 1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 5:20-26; Rom. 3:20. Hallelujah, we have been set free from this cursed self-exiled existence apart from God. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Jn. 8:36.

8. "Jesus tied up the strong man so that he (and later, his church) could pillage the strong man's kingdom (Lk. 11:20-22). In fact, this is what Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God is all about. In the context of Jesus' ministry, it is a warfare concept. 'If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons,' Jesus teaches, 'then the kingdom of God has come to you' (Lk. 11:20). Where God reigns, Satan and his demons cannot. Put otherwise, if the earth is to become the domain in which God is king (the kingdom of God), then it must cease being the domain in which Satan is king. This is what Jesus came to accomplish. He came to 'destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn. 3:8; cf. Heb. 2:14) and to establish God's domain on earth.

Every exorcism and every healing - the two activities that most characterize Jesus' ministry - marked an advance toward establishing the kingdom of God over and against the kingdom of Satan. Consequently, in contrast with any view that would suggest that disease and demonization somehow serve a divine purpose, Jesus never treated such phenomenon as anything other than the work of the enemy. He consistently treated diseased and demonized people as casualties of war. Furthermore, rather than accepting their circumstances as mysteriously fitting into God's sovereign plan, Jesus revolted against them as something that God did not will and something that ought to be vanquished by God's power.

When confronted with a woman who had a deformed back, for example, Jesus did not wonder why God had allowed this to happen. Rather, he immediately diagnosed her as being bound by Satan and freed her from this bondage (Lk. 13:11-16). Indeed, many times Jesus diagnosed illnesses as being directly caused by demons, as when he cast out demons of muteness or deafness (Mk. 9:25; Lk. 11:14). In other cases no exorcism was performed, but Jesus nevertheless opposed the illness as something that was not part of God's kingdom. He assumed that it was at least the indirect result of Satan's pervasive influence in the world. Hence Peter later summarized Jesus' healing ministry by noting that he 'went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil' (Acts 10:38). All sickness and disease was considered a form of Satanic oppression, and so in freeing people from it Jesus demonstrated the presence of the kingdom of God."

Satan and the Problem of Evil, Gregory A. Boyd, pp. 36-37.

"In sum, the world of the New Testament authors was a world at war. Granted, they expressed great confidence that Jesus had in principle defeated Satan and that Satan and all who followed him would eventually be defeated when Christ is enthroned as Lord of the cosmos. But they were just as certain that in this present fallen world order God does not always get his way. He desires all to be saved, for example, but many will perish (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Similarly, God wants believers to be conformed to the image of Christ, but our minds and behavior are usually to some degree conformed to the pattern of the world and under demonic strongholds (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). God's Spirit can be, and frequently is, resisted by our wills (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19). Clearly, the Lord and His church continue to face strong opposition in carrying out God's will as we seek to establish His kingdom on the earth.

The warfare world view of the Bible was adopted and even expanded by the first generation of believers who succeeded the apostles. Their reflections on evil differ significantly from the theology of the post-Augustinian church. They generally assume that the final explanation for evil is to be found in the free wills of Satan, fallen angels and human beings, as opposed to concluding that every particular evil has a divine purpose behind it."

Satan and the Problem of Evil, Gregory A. Boyd, p. 39.

“For Origen, the key to understanding evil in the world is found in a biblical understanding of the origin of Satan and demons. ‘No one . . . who has not heard what is related to him who is called ‘devil,’ and his ‘angels’ . . . will be able to ascertain the origin of evils.’ The crucial ingredient in understanding the devil is understanding that all evil – the only real evil there is! – originates in the will of self-determining creatures. It cannot be traced back to the Creator.

For these early fathers this was as true of ‘natural’ evil as it was of moral evil. Against all who attributed ‘natural’ disasters to God, for example, Origen insists, ‘famine, blasting of the vine and fruit trees, pestilence among men and beasts: all these are the proper occupations of demons.’ So too demons are ‘the cause of plagues . . . barrenness . . . tempests . . . [and] similar calamities.’ Similarly, Tertullian argues the ‘diseases and other grievous calamities’ are the result of demons whose ‘great business is the ruin of mankind.’

For these early authors, there really is no such thing as ‘natural’ evil, if by that one means evil that arises from natural or impersonal causes. Rather, it was generally assumed that there was an evil will behind all evil.”

Satan and the Problem of Evil, Gregory A. Boyd, pp. 46-47.

“My conviction is that these early fathers were headed in the right direction. Unfortunately, in my view, this direction was significantly lost with the advent of Augustine’s blueprint theology. The church, of course, continued to assign the blame for evil on free agents, including angels and demons. But to a large extent it ceased viewing agents as the ultimate explanation of their own behavior. The theodicy I construct in this work is an attempt to continue in the direction of the church fathers who preceded Augustine.”

Satan and the Problem of Evil, Gregory A. Boyd, p. 49.

IV. Blessed Question Number Three: What is the Difference between the Old Testament (Old Covenant) description of God and the New Testament (New Covenant) description of God?

- A. In the Old Testament God is primarily portrayed as the creator, law-giving judge and sovereign king of the universe. In the New Testament God is

revealed primarily as an Abba-Father to all mankind. The portrayals of God in each testament are not mutually exclusive or inconsistent. "Yet there is a difference. The conception and all its factors are placed [in the New Testament] in a new relation to man and the universe, whereby their meaning is **transformed, enhanced and enriched. Two new elements entered men's religious thought and gradually lifted its whole content to a new plane – Jesus Christ's experience and manifestation of the divine fatherhood, and the growing conviction of the church that Christ Himself was God and the full and final revelation of God.**"

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume II, page 1260. (Jn. 1:17-18; 5:37; 6:46; Heb. 3:5-6; Col. 1:13-14; Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

- B. In the Old Testament God was progressively revealed as: God of you; God over you; God for you; God on you. In the New Testament God is progressively revealed as God with you; God in you; God through you. God of the outside is now God of the inside. The role of the Holy Spirit changed from the "ondwelling spirit of Yahweh" to the "indwelling spirit of Christ."(Col. 1:27; Lk. 17:20-21; Jn. 14:17; Eph. 3:17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16).
- C. In the Old Testament God's law and judgment are emphasized. In the New Testament God's grace, forgiveness and truth are emphasized (Jn. 1:17).
- D. In the New Testament God is seen through a "better covenant" with "better promises" (Heb. 8:6-13).
 - 1. Better understanding (Matt. 5:21-48).
 - 2. Better gifts (Lk. 11:12; Jn. 7:38-39; 14:17,265; 16:7-15; Eph. 4:7-13; 11:39-40).
 - 3. Better relationship (Jn. 17:20-26; Heb. 3:1-6).
 - 4. In the New Testament, we have the potential to see God better, to hear Him better, to understand Him better, to receive His love better, to love Him better; all because of His indwelling spirit. It takes God to love God. Our orbit around God is much, much, much closer in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Because of this, we can even understand the Old Testament better than the Old Testament saints. What they scratched their heads at as obedient but frequently

clueless servants, we heartily embrace and understand as beloved sons. (Gal. 4:1-7).

V. **Blessed Question Number Four: Why doesn't anybody in the Old Testament cast out devils, rebuke Satan or expose him as evil?**

A. Where is Satan in the Old Testament? (Where is Waldo?)
(OT = Old Testament: NT = New Testament)

	<u>OT 1,109 pages</u>	<u>NT 334 pages</u>
1. "Devil"	OT references 0	NT references 60
2. "Devils"	OT references 4	NT references 51
3. "Satan"	OT references 19 (14 in Job)	NT references 35
4.	OT references all see Satan as the servant of Jehovah.	All negative!
5.	The only negative reference to Satan is in Zech. 3:1-2.	NT references to Satan all show him as evil and rebellious.
6.	Total OT references 23	Total NT references 146+ (see below).

B. Satan in the New Testament is referred to in other terms that explain his character and purpose:

1. "the evil one" 1 Jn. 5:19.
2. "the god of this world" 2 Cor. 4:4.
3. "a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour" 1 Pet. 5:8.
4. "your adversary" 1 Pet. 5:8.
5. "the tempter" Matt. 4:3.

6. "a murderer from the beginning" Jn. 8:44.
 7. "prince of this world" Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.
 8. "accuser of our brethren" Rev. 12:10.
 9. "thief" Jn. 10:10.
 10. "a liar and the father of it" Jn. 8:44.
 11. "angel of light" 2 Cor. 11:14.
 12. "the prince of the power of the air" Eph 2:2.
 13. "the great dragon . . . old serpent" Rev. 12:9.
- C. The New Testament exposed and judged Satan. (Col. 2:15; Jn. 16:7-15). We have now been equipped (transformed, enhanced and enriched) to be the executors of that judgment. (Matt. 16:19; Heb. 2:6-12; Lu. 10:19; Ps. 149:5-9; Rom. 8:14; 16:20; Rev. 12:11).
- D. The Old Testament saints couldn't handle the meat of truth, only the milk. (Jn. 16:7-12; Gal. 4:1-7; Heb. 5:12-14). The Old Testament view of Satan and evil was dim and partial. Jesus came to reveal the truth about Satan's evil (1 Jn. 3:8) and God's goodness (Jn. 1:18; 10:30; 10:10; Acts 10:38; Lk. 9:51-56).
- E. We must be careful to always read the Old Testament through New Testament eyes. The Old Testament always said that all things, good and evil, come from God. The New Testament says not so: evil comes from Satan or man. Good only comes from God and God is only Good. (Jn. 10:10; Jas. 1:12-17).
- F. It is not that the Old Testament is wrong, but it was written by spiritual children for spiritual children. In some areas, especially with regard to Satan and the problem of evil, it needs to be transformed, enhanced and enriched by the New Testament anointing.
1. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Matt. 11:11. (i.e. No Old Testament saint was greater than John the Baptist, but he was least in the New Testament

kingdom of saints because he and all the other Old Testament saints lacked the indwelling Holy Spirit.).

2. Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements (RSV "elemental spirits") of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal. 4:1-7. (i.e. Old Testament saints were servants because they were spiritual children and lacked maturity to receive the fulness of sonhood.)
3. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:12-14 (see Rom. 3:1-2).
 - a. Old Testament = milk ("unskilful in the word of righteousness")
 - b. New Testament = meat ("senses exercised to discern both good and evil").

G. Did Jesus ever appear to contradict or correct the plain "on its face" meaning of the Old Testament scriptures?

1. Yes!
 - a. Revenge. Matt. 5:38-42; Lk. 9:51-56 (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Dt. 14:21).
 - b. Hatred. Matt. 5:43-48 (Lev. 19:18; Dt. 23:6; Ps. 41:10; 139:21-22; Dt. 7:9-10; Ex. 17:14-16; Dt. 25:17; 7:2,16; Ps.18:33-42).
 - c. Food. Mk. 7:14-23 (Lev. 11:2-47; 20:25; Dt. 14:4-20; Acts 10).
 - d. Murder. Matt. 5:21-26 (Ex. 20:13; Dt. 5:17).

- e. Adultery. Matt. 5:27-30 (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18).
- f. Divorce. Matt. 5:31-32; 19:8 (Dt. 24:1; Jer. 3:1).
- g. Swearing. Matt. 5:33-37 (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Nu. 30:2; Dt. 5:11; 23:23).
- h. Sabbath. Lk. 6:1-11 (Ex. 20:10).

2. Note that in all the above verses Jesus says the Old Testament verses "had been said." In most direct references to the law, Jesus referred to it as Moses' law; ("Moses commanded" Matt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; Jn. 8:5); ("Moses said" Mk. 7:10); ("Moses wrote" Lk. 20:28; 24:44); ("the law of Moses" Jn. 1:17; 7:19, 23; Lk. 2:22; Mk. 12:26). Jesus didn't quote Moses' law as being said directly by God. Perhaps, He meant that the Old Testament saints heard God the best they could, but their limitations resulted in them "stating" incomplete or shallow versions of God's pure word. Paul called the Old Testament law "the ministration of death" (2 Cor. 3:7) because the letter of the law kills (2 Cor. 3:6). But our New covenant has been "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3). Because of this, our complete sufficiency is in God: Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 2 Cor. 3:6.

H. And yet consider: Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Matt 5:17-18. Jesus knew that His teachings and actions appeared to conflict with Old Testament teaching. He wanted to assure the Jews that the conflict came from their "hardness of heart" which kept them from properly processing God's word. (Matt. 19:8). Jesus' anointing fulfilled the law by elevating its truths from literal to spiritual. Only Jesus had the righteousness to fulfill God's truth with God's spirit. The unavoidable conclusion is that the Old Testament can be misused when it is read with unspiritual eyes. Satan misapplied the literal meaning when tempting Jesus in Lk. 4:9-12. The Old Testament cannot be fulfilled by always reading it literally "on its face." It must be spiritually transformed, enhanced and enriched by New Testament eyes enlightened by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is not easy, yet it is mandatory for meat eaters. (Heb. 5:14). The Old Testament must be excavated, elevated and renovated. In Jn. 1:18 we are told that Jesus came to earth to "declare" (explain) the Father because nobody knew Him.

Hallelujah, Jesus came to explain what the Old Testament fully meant, who is the author of evil and how perfectly good His father is. Allow the indwelling Spirit to bring light to the Old Testament shadows (Col. 2:17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1). Shadows lack three dimensions and are often hard to identify what they represent until we look at the actual object in the light which is casting the shadow. The New Testament Kingdom of God is the actual object casting the Old Testament shadows. Let's not get trapped in the dark shadows of doubting God's goodness. Instead, let's allow the spirit of Christ within us to fulfill the Old Testament law by transforming, enhancing and enriching it into the New Testament Kingdom of God.

- I. Boogey man example: We don't expose our young children to dark, scary images of devils, monsters, vampires, etc. because they don't have the emotional equipment to handle it. They would be overwrought with continual fear and nightmares, scared of the dark, scared of being alone, etc. As they mature, they are able to process fearful images constructively and courageously. God did the same with the Old Testament saints (Gal. 4:1-7). In their own righteousness, they lacked the fortitude, faith and authority to cast out devils or rebuke Satan. The "indwelling" Holy Spirit allowed them to do miracles, defeat physical enemies and build the temple, but no Old Testament saint ever rebuked demonic enemies directly. In fact, Old Testament saints were largely ignorant of demonic enemies existing on a large scale. To quote a famous movie line, Old Testament saints "couldn't handle the truth" about Satan as the prince of this world. Jesus began to tell them about it in John 16:7-11, but then had to stop because they had yet to receive the indwelling Holy Spirit. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. Jn. 16:12-13. For Old Testament saints, their enemies were physical, not spiritual. But when Jesus came, He imparted to us His righteousness through the "indwelling" Holy Spirit. Now, we are capable of maturing quickly and grasping the following truth:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Eph. 6:12-13.

- J. God protected the Old Testament saints from the dark truths about Satan by allowing them to assign all things, good and evil, as coming from the sovereign will of God. Just as a young child holds a parent responsible for all things - - bad weather, bad news, bad circumstances, bad toys - Old Testament saints held God responsible for all things that happened - the

good, the bad and the ugly. They had to blame evil on something or somebody, and since they couldn't handle the truth of the Satanic realm, they assigned evil to one of two sources – the active will of God (God actively caused it) or the permissive will of God (God allowed the evil by consenting to its occurrence). Satan was out of the loop altogether, or at best was seen as a servant of Jehovah fulfilling his role in the heavenly act. Seen in this light, God and Satan played "good cop\bad cop" with mankind. God was the good cop trying to protect suspects from His evil partner Satan. Satan was a mean and ugly angelic officer who wanted to beat and abuse suspects into confessing their unworthiness and guilt. God, as the good cop, would restrain Satan as long as the suspect cooperated. Otherwise, God would let Satan have a few minutes alone with the suspect to coerce cooperation through the use of sickness, destructions, disasters, or oppressions. From this angle, God and Satan were both working on the same side. They just used different techniques. Jesus lambasted this view by stating His purpose in coming to man was to destroy the works of Satan, not to work with Satan in any kind of alliance.

This Old Testament view of God and evil was only true in the remotest sense. God did create the heavens and the earth and man and Satan. Because of God's goal of love, He gave creatures freewill to freely choose or reject Him. He risked the possibility of evil developing because true love was worth the risk. Anything less than this risk makes us all robots, not free men. While it is true in a remote sense that God created conditions that make evil possible, is it fair to say He actively created it? God created the law of gravity. Is it fair to blame God if we knowingly walk off a roof and break our leg? While it is a remote truth that God created gravity and that gravity caused our broken bone, is it fair and precise to say it this way – that God broke our leg? Moses Maimonides, the great Jewish Rabbi, believed that the laws of nature (including spiritual sowing and reaping) come from the pre-eternal will of God, not the "at this moment" will of God. We are continually free to accept or reject the "at this moment" will of God. The "at this moment" will of God is always good, but it can only be received and released through a heart of faith.

- K. Isaiah 45:7 and Amos 3:6 say that God created evil and continues to be responsible for it. Deuteronomy 28:15-61 and Leviticus 26:14-29 say that God puts curses and sicknesses on the disobedient. These verses, along with hundreds of other "wrath of God" verses conflict with numerous New Testament verses: John 10:10; James 1:13-17; Acts 10:38; Luke 11:11-13 and many others. How do we solve this conflict? Is the Old Testament true? Yes, certainly. Is the New Testament true? Yes, certainly. Which is more

precise, more evolved, more illuminated? The New Testament for sure (Heb. 8:6-16). When in apparent conflict, the New Testament must trump the Old until we receive revelation from the Spirit on how to better translate and apply the Old Testament passage. Any conflict will be resolved through a proper translation and meditation in the Holy Spirit.

L. Old Testament saints were lacking the following:

1. Blood of the Lamb (imputed righteousness).
2. Baptism of the Holy Spirit (imparted righteousness).
3. Abba-Father relationship (inherited righteousness).
4. Result: their limited ability to process spiritual truth due to their own limited righteousness resulted in God giving them a limited revelation, particularly with regard to Satan and the problem of evil. Jesus clearly taught that the Old Testament saints suffered from "hardness of hearts" which kept them from receiving a full and pure revelation of God's word (Matt. 19:8). They really didn't know where God started or Satan ended, or vice versa, so they lumped it all together under God's sovereignty.
5. **And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. Matt. 17:1-5.**

Note that when Peter wanted to build all three a separate tabernacle, the Father ignored the request and told the disciples to focus only on Jesus. Moses represented the law and Elijah the prophets. Together, they symbolized the Old Testament. The Father's word to the disciples was not to build a tabernacle for the Old Covenant anymore, but instead to listen to Jesus. When it comes to the absolute goodness of God, "hear ye him [Jesus]." Don't build new tabernacles for Old Covenant thinking. Be renewed in the Spirit of your mind. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Heb. 3:1. Now, hear ye him: "The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jn. 10:10.

- M. For the Old Testament saint, good and evil was a "Gordian knot." When Alexander the Great was presented a huge knotted rope by King Gordius of Phrygia, the King told Alexander that it had been prophesied that the man able to untie the impossible knot would be the future ruler of Asia. No man had previously come close to loosening the knot. Alexander's solution: he paused for a moment, then quickly drew his sword and cut the knot in two. He became King of most of the known world. In the Old Testament, no one had been able to loosen the knot of good and evil. It appeared as one thing, with the people unable to separate the source of good events from evil events. Jesus came as an Alexander to cut the knot of good and evil. "The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jn. 10:10.

- N. ". . . It is a significant fact that the statements concerning Satan become numerous and definite only in the NT. The daylight of the Christian revelation was necessary in order to uncover the lurking foe, dimly disclosed but by no means fully known in the earlier revelation. . . .

In the Old Testament Satan is not represented as a fallen and malignant spirit, but as a servant of Jeh, performing a Divine function and having his place in the heavenly train. . . The unveiling of Satan as a rebellious world-power is reserved for the NT, and with this fuller teaching the symbolic treatment of temptation in Gen is to be connected. There is a sound pedagogical reason, from the viewpoint of revelation, for this earlier withholding of the whole truth concerning Satan. In the early states of religious thinking it would seem to be difficult, if not impossible, to hold the sovereignty of God without attributing to His agency those evils in the world which are more or less directly connected with judgment and punishment. . . . The progressive revelation of God's character and purpose, which more and more imperatively demands that the origin of moral evil, and consequently natural evil, must be traced to the created will in opposition to the Divine, leads to the ultimate declaration that Satan is a morally fallen being to whose conquest the Divine Power in history is pledged. . . ."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, page 2695 (Eerdmans).

- O. The goodness of God can't be grasped until we understand the evil of Satan. Jn. 10:10 most clearly defines their separate ministries. Satan steals, kills and destroys. God gives abundant life. Satan uses oppression. God uses deliverance. Satan makes sick. God heals. (See Acts 10:38; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Pet. 5:8; Jn. 8:44; Rev. 12:10; 1 Jn. 5:19). It is crucial that we rightly discern between God and Satan, good and evil, light and darkness (Is. 5:20; Heb. 5:14; 1 Cor. 2:15). We must be guided by the New Testament teachings which demand that we resist all the works of Satan - sin, sickness, poverty, fear and failure. Resisting all these things is the fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8-10; Matt. 11:12; Eph. 6:10-17).
- P. The Old Testament is a treasure house with hidden treasure. The map to the treasure is the New Testament. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. Prov. 25:2. All the truth of the New is revealed in the Old, but the Old must be re-translated with spiritual eyes. For example:

And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 2 Sam 24:1.

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. 1 Chr 21:1.

Same event. Same David. Same Sin. Same Israel. Same Result: 70,000 dead Israelites. Different cause of evil. Consider David's sin of numbering of Israel described in 2 Sam 24:1 and 1 Chr. 21:1. If "the anger of the Lord" caused David to sin in numbering Israel, according to the writer of 2 Samuel, then how can the writer of 1 Chronicles 21 say that "Satan" caused David to number Israel? If these two terms are synonymous, then how many other times, when the Old Testament refers to the destructive wrath of God, is it really more accurately referring to the doings of Satan? At the very least, these passages prove that Old Testament events may be looked at from two very different perspectives. The first perspective omits, either intentionally or ignorantly, the immediate and primary cause of evil (Satan) while reeling in God, the remotest party responsible, and unfairly assigning Him as the immediate and primary cause of evil. The second perspective rightly attributes the immediate and primary cause of evil to Satan and man, i.e. the created free wills which choose to produce evil. (Isn't it interesting that the Chronicles passage is the first time that the name "Satan" is used, almost halfway through the Old Testament?).

The book of Job also shows these two perspectives. Chapters One and Two clearly show that Satan, not God, killed Job's children\servants and afflicted his health and finances. Yet, Job and his friends continually attributed the destruction to God with such statements as, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." (Job 1:21). They never mention, rebuke or resist Satan in any way. All would admit that this is not the New Testament way of responding to Satanic attacks. Their entire focus was on guessing (accusing) why God did it. Job was a sincere and righteous man, but he was clueless that Satan was the source of his misfortune and God the source of his good fortune. Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. . . . Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Job 40:3-5; 42:3. Though Job was righteous, he did have areas of fear Satan was able to attack (Heb. 2:14-15; Eph. 4:27). This fear gave Satan access to partially penetrate God's protective hedge. That Job struggled with fear is established by Job. 3:25-26. His anxiety over his grown children's lack of spirituality is indicated in Job 1:4-5.

Q. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:14. The Old Testament is our textbook for training our senses to discern good and evil. If we can, by the Spirit, separate God's heart from Satan's role in the Old Testament stories, we will be trained to do it in our lives and for those to whom we minister. God's glory will then be released in full measure. Consider the following steps in this training:

1. **Step One:**

Decide whether you are going to live as a New Creation under the New Covenant or an Old Creation under the Old Covenant.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that **we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.**

Rom. 7:6. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; **Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.** But if the **ministration of death**, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the **ministration of condemnation** be glory, much more doth the **ministration of righteousness** exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But **their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.** 2 Cor. 3:3-18.

Now, let's summarize the key points in the above passage on the following table:

<u>Old Creation\Covenant\Testament</u>	<u>New Creation\Covenant\Testament</u>
letter (literal reading) kills (faith) (2 Cor. 3:6)	spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6)
written with ink and engraved in tablets of stone (2 Cor. 3:3,7)	written by the spirit of the living God in the hearts of men (2Cor. 3:3)
equips ministration of death, condemnation and man-elevation (2 Cor. 3:6-9)	enables ministration of life, spirit and corporate righteousness (2 Cor. 3:6-9, 18)
glory is fleeting and fading (2 Cor. 3:7-11)	glory abides and remains (2 Cor. 3:7-11)
it has been done away with (2 Cor. 3:11)	it remains (2 Cor. 3:11)
is for blinded minds and veiled hearts (2 Cor. 3:14-16)	is for open minds and open hearts (2 Cor. 3:17-18)
understanding of Old Testament is hidden (2 Cor. 3:14-16)	understanding of Old Testament is revealed in Christ (2 Cor. 3:14-18)

2. **Step Two:**

Decide that the New Testament spirit of the word trumps the Old Testament letter of the law. God didn't change between the Old and New Testaments, but man sure did. With the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are now able to process and receive the Father's heart and goodness. God was the exact same in the Old Testament but man's understanding of Him was completely different. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Heb. 13:8. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Mal. 3:6.

Now, let's compare some Old Testament verses with New Testament verses on the key issue of God's goodness. These verses conflict with each other because they come from a different spirit, a different covenant, and a different orbit. We are to live in the right column, not the left. (Heb. 8:6-13).

Old Creation\Covenant\Testament	New Creation\Covenant\Testament
<p>I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Is. 45:7</p>	<p>Blessed is the man that endure temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Jas. 1:12-17</p>
<p>Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it? Amos 3:6</p>	<p>The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Jn. 10:10</p>
<p>If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. Dt. 28:58-63</p>	<p>And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. Lk. 9:51-56</p>
<p>But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. 1 Sam. 16:14</p>	<p>How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. Acts 10:38</p>

Old Creation\Covenant\Testament	New Creation\Covenant\Testament
<p>And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:21.</p>	<p>He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 Jn. 3:8.</p>
<p>But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. Lev. 26:14-17, 21-22.</p>	<p>If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Lk. 11:11-13. (In all honesty, can you imagine Jesus saying and doing these things listed in the left column scriptures? Can you imagine Jesus sending evil spirits, sickness, wonderful plagues, desolation and <u>beasts</u> to <u>kill</u> our <u>children</u>? No, never! Satan does these things, not God, not Jesus, not the Holy Spirit. Old Testament writers simply did not understand Satan's role in this world, so they attributed both good and evil to God.)</p>

3. **Step Three:**

Test the spirit of every Old Testament scripture to see if it needs to be transformed, enhanced and enriched by the New Testament anointing.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 Jn. 4:1. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. 1 Thes. 5:21-22.

Sometimes the literal ("letter of the law") meaning of the Old Testament is also the spiritual meaning, but sometimes it is not. If the literal meaning of the Old Testament contradicts the New Testament spirit, then the literal meaning of the Old Testament must be excavated, renovated and elevated into the spirit. For example:

- a. Jesus excavated, renovated and elevated the literal meaning of Old Testament scriptures on revenge, hatred, murder, adultery, divorce, swearing and the Sabbath. (See G. above

and Matt. 5:21-48; Lk. 6:1-11 and Lk. 9:51-56). Sometimes Jesus clarified and amplified them. Other times, Jesus outright contradicted literal Old Testament scriptures, such as those regarding revenge and hatred (Matt. 5:38-48). Jesus stunned His listeners when He told them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mk. 2:26. He was addressing those critical of His disciples for picking corn to eat on the Sabbath. He was in essence telling them to stop living by the letter of the law and start living by the spirit of the law. This statement beautifully establishes that the law was made for man's spirit to use in knowing God better, not that man was made for slavish obedience for the law's sake. By the Spirit, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by transforming it from literal truth to spiritual truth. (Matt. 5:17-19).

- b. King David hated his fleshly enemies (other men) with a "perfect hatred." (Ps. 139:21-22). He wounded them, destroyed them, "beat them small as the dust before the wind," and "cast them out as the dirt in the streets." (Ps. 18:33-42). Psalm 35 is a psalm of merciless revenge toward other men: Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. Ps. 35:4-8, 15-16; 26. David prayed for Babylonian children to be smashed to death against the rocks. (Ps. 137:8-9). David also took Ammonite prisoners and cut them up with saws and chopped them into pieces with axes (1 Chr. 20:1-3). These above verses are diametrically opposed to the New Testament teachings of Jesus: Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine

enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Matt. 5:38-44. What are we to think of this conflict? First, we must allow the New Covenant to trump the Old until the Holy Spirit shows us how to transform, enhance and enrich the Old Testament shadow into New Testament light. As the Spirit renovates these verses, we see that David had the right sentiment, but against the wrong enemy. Our perfect hatred is never to be applied to other men, but rather to our spiritual enemies - - Satan and his demons. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Eph. 6:12-13. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Cor. 10:3-6. One need only consider the blood baths of the crusades and the excesses of certain church leaders like Calvin to see how Old Testament violence has been wrongly applied. Only new covenant hearts circumcised and indwelt by the Holy Spirit are able to mine certain truths about God from the Old Testament. If we lack the courage to renovate Old Testament truth, then we will be chained by its apparent darkness and contradiction with the teachings of our Lord under the New Covenant.

- c. Paul also excavated, renovated and elevated certain Old Testament verses from their literal meaning to New Testament spiritual meaning. In 1 Cor. 14:21, Paul took an Old Testament passage which on its face had nothing to do with New Testament tongues (Is. 28:11-12), and transformed, enhanced and enriched it to make it a prophetic passage for the spiritual gift of tongues. Paul did the same thing by excavating the concept of circumcision from an empty and meaningless ritual to a spiritual transformation of the heart. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. 1 Cor. 7:19. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Gal. 5:6. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom. 2:29. Paul also elevated

animal sacrifices from being useless rituals under the "letter of the law" to a wonderful prophetic image of Christ's perfect sacrifice once and for all for sins. Heb. 10:1-10. Paul also transformed the Sabbath from a "letter of the law" weekly ritual to an ongoing lifestyle state of being. Heb. 4:1-11. Peter and Paul both renovated Old Testament dietary laws by integrating faith and thanksgiving into the true spiritual diet. (Acts. 11:5-10; Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Tim. 4:3-4). Peter did the same thing in taking Joel 2:28-29 and excavating, renovating and elevating it to prophesy the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is beyond dispute that the Old Testament scholars of their day would have accused Paul and Peter (and the other New Testament writers) of butchering and misusing scriptures. They didn't see that the Old Testament scriptures needed to be transformed, enhanced and enriched. They failed to understand the key to Old Testament translation Jesus gave us in Matt. 11:13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. In other words, the Old Testament scriptures are all prophetic seeds waiting to be activated by New Covenant anointing. Without the anointing, Old Testament scriptures are dark and mysterious when read "by the letter." But when we add the water of the New Covenant Spirit and the light of Jesus, these hard seeds break open and sprout prophetic life.

- d. Jesus challenges us to always make sure what spirit we are currently operating in. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. Lk. 9:51-56. James and John were operating in the spirit of Old Testament cruelty, not New Testament love. That is why we must take the following verses to heart every day: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 Jn. 4:1; Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. 1 Thes. 5:21-22.

4. **Step Four:**

Recognize that Satan seeks to continually lure us into misusing scripture by reading it by "the letter of the law."

- a. Satan disguises himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14-15). He attempted to mislead Jesus into reading scripture (Ps. 91:11-12) "by the letter of the law" so that Jesus would hurl Himself off the temple to His death (Lk. 4:10-11). Paul tells us this "angel of light" recruits evil ministers who disguise themselves by being "transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14). **These demonic messengers, often unknowingly and unwittingly, seek to "bewitch" believers into reading the scriptures "by the letter" (legalistically, literally and by natural thinking).**

O foolish Galatians! **Who has bewitched you**, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: **Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?** Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? . . . **For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse;** for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live;" but the law does not rest on faith, for "He who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" - that **in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.** Gal. 3:1-3, 10-14. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir. **Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?** Gal. 4:6-9. For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and **do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.** Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you have fallen away from grace. Gal. 5:1-4.

These demonic elemental spirits seek to keep us in bondage under the "letter of the law." Satan, as an angel of light, uses the letter of the law to chain us into legalism and natural

thinking. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. 2:14. Once chained, oppression rules our lives while religion becomes a hollow and powerless ritual. . . . Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Matt. 15:6-9.

- b. Satan = angel of light = anti-Christ spirit = spirit of the world. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 1 Jn. 2:18. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 Jn. 4:1-4. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 2 Jn. 7. The word "anti" means either "opposite," "instead of" or "up against." The latter term carries the idea of a false imitation positioned right up against the real thing, trying to call attention to itself and seeking to block attention from the true form. Thus, the anti-Christ spirit seeks to block the anointing ("Christ") of God by pushing itself right up against the real thing. The perfect example of this dynamic occurs in Matthew 16:13-23. In these verses, Peter gets a revelation straight from the heavenly Father that Christ is the son of the living God (v. 16). Jesus responds in blessed amazement that Peter's word from the Father will be the cornerstone of the church and destroy Satan's power on the earth. Yet, a mere three verses later Peter rebukes Jesus from going the way of the cross which awaited Him at Jerusalem (v. 22). Jesus responds by telling Peter to, "Get thee behind me, Satan." (v. 23). Here, Peter heard a pure word from God which would open the windows of heaven, but the anti-Christ spirit moved right in on top of it and deceived Peter into trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross. Peter heard and obeyed a true word from God and a true word from Satan, both within a few seconds of each other.

This is why we must read the scriptures with great care. Satan is always pushing "by the letter" legalism and natural thinking up against our reading God's word "in the Spirit." Satan did this to Adam and Eve in the garden, Jesus in the wilderness, and us today. His strongest attempts come in the area of God's goodness. He will take any passage we read, especially in the Old Testament, push himself right up against it and jump up and down claiming, "You see, God is not good after all - - he kills children, he sends disasters, he sends plagues, he sends evil spirits, he is the author of evil and he may well kill you at any moment." This is why we must take no prisoners when it comes to God's goodness. This is why we must test the spirits and hold fast to what is good. Jesus said, "there is none good but one, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). By "the letter of the law" (which kills our faith), many Old Testament verses seem to attribute evil to God. This is anti-Christ attempting to chain us to reading the scriptures literally and in our natural thinking. Many attempt to get around this by saying, "If God does it, it is not evil no matter how evil it appears." This is just a shell game and avoids the real issue: But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:14. We are called to discern both good and evil. Old Testament saints lacked the spiritual resources to divide good and evil accurately. Their warped view attributes both good and evil to God while leaving Satan almost entirely out of the equation. We are called to re-calibrate the Old Testament, where needed, and to bring it into line with the New Testament.

5. **Step Five:**

Realize that Old Testament saints heard God from a veiled perspective.

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. 2 Cor. 3:14-16. Although they didn't fully realize it, they were hearing muffled discussions from the "veiled" heavenly courts without knowing precisely who the participants were. Because they couldn't process who Satan was, an enemy of God and man, they assumed that all voices behind the veil were of God. Thus, at best, Satan was seen as a servant of God whose ministry was testing man for God's pleasure. At worst, Satan wasn't even acknowledged as a factor at

all. The only book in the Old Testament which mentions the heavenly court battle is Job. But even here Satan isn't portrayed as the fierce enemy of righteousness that he is in the New Testament. Any time an Old Testament saint received revelation from God, rest assured he was also hearing Satan's anti-Christ input trying to distort, warp or mistake the message. Instead of separating the voices of God and Satan, some men would combine them into one voice. This is how the Old Testament God of wrath and remoteness developed. With the tearing away of the veil by Jesus (2 Cor. 3:14; Matt. 27:51), we now know that there were two voices in every Old Testament transaction and that we are called to separate them into two camps - - God the good and Satan the evil. We now know that the good voice we have heard in the heavenly court has been Jesus for "we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 Jn. 2:1. The evil voice we have heard is Satan the demonic prosecutor, who "accuses" all the brethren "before our God day and night." Rev. 12:10. We know now that Satan frequently uses scripture, especially the Old Testament, to accuse us and God of shameful things. But now we are empowered to use the New Testament, the word of Jesus, to rebut Satan's "letter of the law" attacks. We now wield the sword of the Spirit to lay Satan flat with God's goodness in our lives. We also have the shield of faith to block every anti-Christ accusation against us and God. The key to discovering God's goodness is learning how to distinguish the two voices behind the veil - - first, that there are two voices in fierce opposition, and second, which voice is for us and which is against us. Once we learn the voice of the true shepherd, Jesus, we will not listen to the voice of the stranger (Satan). Jn. 10:1-14.

6. **Step Six:**

Don't try to figure out all Old Testament scriptures at once.

Take them on a case by case basis. Meditate on the incident. Ask your Heavenly Father to show you where His goodness is in every passage. As you continue to ponder in prayer, God will quicken certain angles in the situation you've never considered before. Let me show you a few of my own personal meditations on certain scriptures:

- a. Cain and Abel. Cain slaying Abel is usually portrayed as a stern tale where God forever brands Cain with the mark of a murderer which he must bear in shame the rest of his life. The Holy Spirit quickened to me that the mark of Cain was in reality a mark of mercy which kept everybody from harming

Cain. (Gen. 4:15). Cain had sown murder and was in a position of harvesting the same harm to himself from others. But God intervened with the law of mercy to keep him from fully reaping the fruit of his sin. What a good and loving God!

- b. Pharaoh and the Ten Plagues. According to the law of sowing and reaping, when Pharaoh sowed the sin of killing every newborn male Israelite, he set forth the circumstances which would harvest the death of every firstborn Egyptian. Ex. 1:15-16, 22. God didn't expedite this harvest, but did everything He could to delay it so that Pharaoh might repent. The plagues were a result of God's attempts to show mercy to Pharaoh. The cycle of God's mercy flowed like this: Pharaoh sins by killing Israelite male newborns. God sends Moses to Pharaoh to warn him to let God's people go as a form of restitution for Egypt's prior evil. Pharaoh refuses. God withdraws His protective Spirit from Egypt enough to allow Satanic forces to inflict plague number one. Moses again warns Pharaoh to let the people go. Pharaoh again refuses. God withdraws His protective Spirit further this time allowing Satanic forces to inflict plague number two. Then the cycle repeats over and over until God's mercy has been fully expended as Pharaoh's heart has become fully hardened. Now Egypt must reap the full harvest of their unrepented of sowing - - the death of their firstborn male children. Isn't it obvious that the death angel who killed the Egyptian children was not an angel from the Lord, but rather was Satan who the New Testament labels as the Lord of death? Heb. 2:14. Satan would kill any and all of us anytime God's protective spirit withdrew to the point that would allow it. God gives us near endless opportunities to repent and avoid the full reaping of our evil sowing. But, at some point, our freewill choice and consequence would be violated if God's mercy never allowed us to reap our unrepented of sowing. Remember, God loved Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He wasn't looking to kill them. He was looking to save them.
- c. Saul and the Evil Spirit From the Lord. 1 Sam. 16:14-23 seems to say that God sent an evil spirit to torment Saul, and that only David's harp playing could provide relief and drive the evil spirit away. This is so contrary to New Testament teaching that this is really a "no-brainer." The evil spirit was a demon

who had access to afflict Saul because of Saul's sinful sowing. God didn't send it. Satan did. How do we know this? Because Jesus never afflicted anybody with evil spirits. The only time Jesus sent evil spirits anywhere was when He sent them out of people into pigs, water and dry places. Jesus came to declare and explain how the Father operates. Jn. 1:18. If you see Jesus, you've seen the Father. Jn. 14:9. Jesus never sent evil spirits to afflict men, so we can with all confidence say that neither has the Father. The Old Testament writer here was clueless as to Satan's role in the demonic world. So, both good and evil spirits were attributed as coming from God.

- d. David's Numbering of Israel and the Killing of 70,000 Israelites by the Angel of the Lord. (See P. above). Study this passage both in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. It tells how David's sin in numbering Israel prompted the angel of the Lord to kill seventy thousand Israelites with the sword of pestilence. At one point, God intervened and told the angel to stay his hand (1 Chr. 21:15). Poor David lamented to the Lord: Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued. 1 Chr. 21:17. David was so scared at this angel's sword that he was afraid of going into the tabernacle set up at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. 1 Chr. 21:30. If David had been spirit baptized under the New Covenant, then he would have seen that this angel of the Lord was a demon able to inflict serious damage because of the sin David had sown. God doesn't kill His own people. Satan destroys the flesh of men. (1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 1:20; Lk. 22:31-32; 1 Jn. 5:19). God was doing everything He could do to stop the slaughter without violating the freewill of David's choice and consequence. This is a difficult passage to understand as to why David's sin of numbering gave Satan such incredible access to attack. Perhaps it indicated a level of pride in the fleshly numbers of the army. Conversely, perhaps it indicated a lack of faith in God's ability to save with few or many. At any rate, it was a lethal sin. This passage is also significant because it shows a clear conflict in Old Testament thinking. 1 Chronicles 21:1 clearly states Satan provoked David to number Israel. 2 Samuel 24:1 clearly states the Lord moved David to number

Israel. This is ironclad proof that Satan and God are confused in Old Testament understanding. We now know that Satan steals, kills and destroys while God gives abundant life, healing and blessing.

- e. Abraham's Offering of Issac. Did God actually tell Abraham to sacrifice Isaac by killing the boy with a knife while he laid bound with rope, and then to burn the body afterwards? (Gen. 22:6-10). I believe that Satan attempted to get Abraham to go beyond what God actually said. What Abraham initially heard from the Lord was akin to Matthew 10:37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matt. 10:37. In other words, God told Abraham to sacrifice his relationship with Isaac unto God. No relationship can be prioritized ahead of our personal relationship with God. Abraham had to love God more than Isaac by releasing Isaac wholly unto the Lord as a figurative burnt offering. Satan perverted this word and attempted to get Abraham to hear it "by the letter of the law." What God meant as a figurative or symbolic truth, Satan was accusing Abraham of having to do literally. This is a perfect example of the two voices of Satan and God being heard beyond the veil at the same time. Abraham, in his own righteousness, was unable to perfectly discern where God's voice ceased and Satan's voice continued. But, because Abraham was a man of faith, God sent an angel to tell him face to face not to execute the boy. God certainly appreciated Abraham's zeal and willingness to show his love for God, but the Lord was not going to allow Abraham to misapply his faith in this situation by killing his son. Instead, God did provide a ram for Abraham to understand, in a limited way, the mercy of God. (Gen. 22:13). This mercy would ultimately come from Isaac's seed - - Jesus as the lamb of God who would be offered for the sins of the world. (Rev. 5:12). Even though Genesis makes no mention of Satan in this passage, it is significant to note that other early Jewish literature (Jubilees 17:16) attributes the initiative to kill Isaac to "Prince Mastema" (a name for Satan in this document, acting in the role of the prosecutor as in the drama of Job). Most assuredly, Satan wanted the knife to fall on Isaac. Most assuredly, God did not.
- f. Noah and the Flood. Without God's actions, the flood would

certainly not have occurred. Yet, what exact role did God play in the process? I believe the event transpired as follows: Men continually sowed wickedness in the earth until their thoughts and imaginations were purely evil (Gen. 6:5). God knew His mercy would have to be withdrawn in one hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3). God warned His righteous Noah to build a protective Ark for Noah and his family. (Gen. 6:8-22). Satan continued to accuse God that He should repent of ever making mankind and that they had to be wiped out (Gen. 6:6-7). God responded that His righteous Noah would not fail and that his righteous seed would be preserved (Gen. 6:8). God withdrew His protective spirit when the law of mercy had been fully expended and men's hearts had become fully hardened and reprobate. Satan released his killer flood and the wicked perished (Gen. 7:10-24). God's protective spirit contracted down to the size of Noah's ark and brought them through the flood and blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. (Gen. 9:1). I freely admit to excavating, renovating and elevating Moses' version of the flood to comply with the New Testament understanding of God's role in the world. I don't believe the New Testament teaches that God directly causes natural disasters. Such events are caused by Satan through access given him by men's sinful sowing. God's protective spirit of mercy hangs on as long as God can without violating the freewill of the men involved. Then God is forced to withdraw and Satan is allowed space to execute wrath through the curses of the law. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 1 Cor. 15:56. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Gal. 3:10. Some may say that 2 Peter 2:4-10 suggests that the New Testament confirms that God brought the flood of Noah on the world of the ungodly. However, in consulting two different interlinear Bibles, one by Paul McReynolds and the other by Jay P. Green, the passage is found to literally say that "the flood the world of irreverent ones having brought on." In other words, this passage says that the flood was brought on by the sowing of wicked men. Men continually sowed the sin. God withdrew His spirit progressively over one hundred and twenty years. Satan brought the full harvest of destruction. God continued to protect Noah.

Some weeks ago, I asked the Lord what He thought of this teaching on the goodness of God. His reply to my heart was, "I don't kill my children!" I believe that what I have done with these Old Testament verses is no different than what Jesus, Paul, Peter and others did in transforming, enhancing, enriching, excavating, renovating and elevating Old Testament scriptures into New Testament anointing.

I think all can agree that Satan was not taking a coffee break during the entire Old Testament. He was not twiddling his thumbs during the flood. He was just as active in the Heavenly Courts in the Old Testament as he is today. The Old Testament saints just didn't realize it. The unfortunate result was that they conjoined their image of God with the evil of Satan. This spiritual siamese twin (God and Satan joined at the hip) formed an Old Testament view of god which was wildly inconsistent. God was good, but God did evil. God loved Israelites but God killed them many times in anger. God healed, but God also afflicted. The result of this was a double-minded view of God which was remote, fearful and not intimate. Jesus came to change that. Whenever the Old Testament contradicts the character of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels, then we are commissioned and compelled to transform and harmonize Old Testament passage with the spiritual tuning fork of New Testament truth. Consider the similar advice of C. S. Lewis:

The two things one must not do are (a) to believe on the strength of Scripture or on any other evidence that God is in any way evil (In Him is no darkness at all) (b) to wipe off the slate any passage which seems to show that He is. Behind the shocking passage be sure there lurks some great truth which you don't understand. If one ever does come to understand it, one sees that it is good and just and gracious in ways we never dreamed of. Till then it must just be left on one side.

But why are baffling passages left in at all? Oh, because God speaks not only for us little ones but for the great sages and mystics who experience what we can only read about, and to whom all the words have therefore different (richer) contents. Would not a revelation which contained nothing that you and I did not understand, be for that very reason rather suspect? To a child it would seem a contradiction to say both that his parents made him and God made him, yet we see how both can be true. (Letters of C. S. Lewis (8 August 1953), para. 2-3, p. 253).

The Quotable Lewis, Tyndall House Publishers, Inc. (1989), p. 73.

We are also not to use New Testament scriptures for the Epistles to contradict the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. Again, consider C. S. Lewis on this point:

I take it as a first principle that we must not interpret any one part of Scripture so that it contradicts other parts, and specially we must not use an apostle's teaching to contradict that of our Lord. (Letters of C. S. Lewis, (August, 1953), para. 1, p. 251).

The Quotable Lewis, Tyndall House Publishers, Inc. (1989), p. 72.

VI. **Blessed Question Number Five: What is the difference between a spiritual servant and a spiritual son?**

A. Consider Moses' hind view of God's goodness in Exodus 33:13-23. He could only see and relate to it at an angled distance. He could not see God's goodness face to face. Because of this, he was unable to intimately portray God's true goodness to the Israelites (Nu. 20:7-12). This is why Moses, as faithful as he was, was still a servant. It took Jesus transforming, enhancing and enriching the Old Testament law to **transform, enhance and enrich us** as sons of God. (Remember, Moses wrote the entire Torah, including Genesis).

B. Servanthood v. Sonhood

1. Qualities

a. Henceforth I call you not servants; **for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth**: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Jn. 15:15.

b. Now I say, That **the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant**, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But **when the fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore **thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ**. Gal. 4:1-7.

c. And **Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant**, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But **Christ as a son over his own house**; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Heb. 3:5-6.

d. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the **spirit of bondage again to fear**; but ye have received **the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father**. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Rom. 8:14-17.

e. Example: In the prodigal son, the older brother had a servant

mentality and never experienced the fullness of his father's love although they lived in the same household. However, the younger brother experienced full sonship, free to be curious, free to return and be forgiven, and free to be fully restored. Which son knew the father's heart better?

2. Qualities in Contrast

- a. Servants obey without understanding, while sons seek to obey with understanding.
 - b. Servants aren't curious, only dutiful, while sons are passionately curious in carrying out their duties. The father wants and welcomes sons who want to know His heart and understand His ways.
 - c. Servants are distant and formal, while sons are intimate and natural.
 - d. Servants don't inherit, while sons inherit.
 - e. Servants are in bondage, while sons are free.
- C. The goodness of God teaching is what fully translates us from servants to sons. It reveals the heart of God on both higher and deeper levels. We can now joyfully search the Old Testament scriptures knowing that God's character is never changing: always good, noble, loving and full of mercy. No longer must we scratch our heads at the seeming cruelty of the Old Testament God of vengeance. Through the faith of Jesus, we see and feel the Father's love for all men. This is a Father God we want to know better and better, not having to be fearful of what disaster He is about to bless us with according to His mysterious will. Instead, we embrace His will as we look forward to ever-increasing faith, goodness and blessing.

VII. **Blessed Question Number Six: What is the difference between a primary and secondary cause?**

- A. A primary cause is that cause which is most immediate, direct and closely connected to the effect in question. A secondary cause is one which is remote, indirect and not closely connected to the effect in question, but which may allow or enable the primary cause to be present.

1. A match being struck primarily causes a fire, not a match being manufactured, sold or carried in the pocket. Although the fire would not have started without these secondary causes existing, it is not logical to label them as the immediate or direct cause of a fire. Our freewill is a match manufactured by God. What evil we choose with it is our responsibility, combined with Satan's input. What good we choose is also our responsibility (faith) combined with God's input (grace).
 2. The apple being eaten caused the fall of man. Adam blamed the event on Eve and God: ("It was the woman You gave me"). Eve blamed it on Satan: ("The serpent deceived me"). Neither Adam or Eve identified themselves as a primary cause of the fall. Eve was more accurate than Adam in identifying the serpent as a primary cause, but still omitted her own responsibility. (Remember, the Hebrew nuances in this passage suggest that Adam was present and observed Eve and the serpent interacting.)
- B. Beware the mistake of omitting Satan and/or ourselves as co-primary causes of all our afflictions. When we do this, God gets reeled in as the primary source, which allows us to dump our unblessed accusatory questions in His undeserving lap. God can be listed as a secondary cause of everything, but only because He is the creator of everything. Secondary causes are not responsible for the effect, only for providing an opportunity for the primary cause to exist. If one wants to assert the Holocaust, for example, of being God's responsibility because Hitler was a man and God created all men, then one might say God ordained or allowed the Holocaust. This was the Old Testament method. The better New Testament way is to assign the Holocaust to two primary sources – man and devils. **God's protective presence had been rejected, neglected and/or unselected by the key players.**

VIII. **Blessed Question Number Seven: Who is the author of evil?**

- A. God is the author of creation and salvation. (Gen. 1-2; Heb. 5:9; 12:2).
- B. God being omnipotent (all powerful) does not mean that God is omni-causative (that He directly and actively causes everything). (Lk. 11:2; Jas. 1:12-17).
- C. God is not the author of evil. Evil comes from the abuse, misuse and/or non-

use of freewill.

1. God created men and angels with free will. (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:15-17; Jude 6; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). Consider this quote by C. S. Lewis:

The sin, both of men and of angels, was rendered possible by the fact that God gave them free will; thus surrendering a portion of His omnipotence (it is again a deathlike or descending movement) because He saw that from a world of free creatures, even though they fell, He could work out (and this is the re-ascent) a deeper happiness and a fuller splendor than any world of automata would admit. (Miracles, chap. 14, para. 20, pp 121-122).

The Quotable Lewis, Tyndall House Publishers, Inc. (1989), p. 228.

2. God will do as much as possible to encourage, enable and enhance our free will. (Phil. 2:13). Again consider C. S. Lewis on this point:

God has made it a rule for Himself that he won't alter people's character by force. He can and will alter them - - but only if the people will let Him. . . . He would rather have a world of free beings, with all its risks, than a world of people who did right like machines because they couldn't do anything else. The more we succeed in imagining what a world of perfect automatic beings would be like, the more, I think, we shall see His wisdom. (God in the Dock, "The Trouble with 'X' . . ." (1948), para. 5, pp 152-153).

The Quotable Lewis, Tyndall House Publishers, Inc. (1989), p. 229.

3. God will not cross the line and violate our free will. It is a stone He has declared He cannot, must not and will not lift; for to do so would automatically abort all our freewills and render us robots rather than men. At the moment God violated the freewill of any man, then all men would undergo a Pinocchio transformation in reverse: we would all change from real boys to wooden puppets in the twinkling of an eye. God's puppet strings would be forever attached and in absolute control of our every slavish movement, thought and emotion. Freely choosing to love and unite with God would be impossible. We could no longer become sons, only remain slaves. Again, consider C. S. Lewis on this pivotal issue:

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata - - of creatures that worked like machines - - would hardly be worth

creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

. . . If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will - that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings - - then we may take it if it is worth paying. (Mere Christianity, bk.II, chap. 3, pp. 52-53).

The Quotable Lewis, Tyndall House Publishers, Inc. (1989), pp 229-230.

4. God violating our free will would make us robots and slaves, not true sons. Violating our free wills would be an act of spiritual abortion. God will not abort us, no matter how risky the pregnancy. He longs to give birth to us as manifest sons of God. (Rom. 8:19). Having seven children, I have learned the importance of cultivating their freewills. If I make them choose what I want in every situation, then all I have are robot slaves who I have programmed with my will. But, if I nurture their freewills, encouraging them by showing them the rewards of their good choices, and warning them by showing them the pain of their bad choices, then I have developed true sons who take full responsibility for their own spiritual lives. If, however, I take away consequences for their choices (rewards for good and punishment for evil), then I have let their freewills remain unused, untrained and unstrengthened. This atrophied state will leave them unable to choose responsibly. Giving them choices without consequences is robbing them of their freewill. It is the consequence that should motivate every choice. If I do my child's homework for him every night, I have robbed him of his freewill because he has not experienced the reward of doing his homework well or the punishment of not doing his homework at all or doing it poorly. Similarly, if when I teach my child to ride a bike, I continually hold on to the bike, the child has not truly learned to balance the bike himself. He neither knows the reward of true effort or the failure of giving up. I have kept him from choosing. God will not make this mistake. He lets us learn to ride the bike or not, to do our homework or not, to choose blessing or cursing - - truth and consequence.
5. God desires us to freely and fully choose to receive and return His love.
 - a. **Love is the goal:** Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God;

and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. 1 Jn. 4:7-21.

Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.** And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matt. 22:37-40.

- b. **Freewill is the means:** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God,** and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Dt. 30:19-20.
- c. **Risk is the price:** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: **But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.** Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Jas.

1:12-17.

6. God risks that we will choose to co-create evil with Satan rather than co-create love with God. Of course, few consciously choose Satan, but an unbelieving heart defaults to Satan with or without our conscious awareness. Not choosing God by faith in any situation is choosing Satan's will for the matter. Satan doesn't care what you do as long as you do it without faith. Satan's great secret to defeating us comes as we fall prey to his master strategy: **we fail to see him coming**. In disguise, usually using our own voice, he whispers thoughts of doubt, despair and deceit. As we accept these thoughts as our own, faith is evicted and unbelief moves in.
 - a. Whatever is not from faith is sin. (Rom. 14:23; Jn. 16:9).
 - b. All unrighteousness is sin. (1 Jn. 5:17).
 - c. Non-love is sin. (1 Jn. 4:8; Ga. 5:6).
 - d. Hardness of heart is evil. (Heb. 3:12-13; Matt. 19:8; Mk. 10:5; 3:5; 16:14).

7. The "created will" authors evil: Satan and man operate in conjunction. Satan and man co-operate to co-create evil, just as God and man co-operate to co-create good. Because of God's goal of love, He gave creatures freewill to freely choose or reject Him. He risked the possibility of evil developing because true love was worth the risk. Anything less than this makes us all robots, not free men. Freewill requires choice and consequence. Choice without consequence is not freewill. For freewill to exist, there has to be a possibility that evil will be chosen. God never creates evil, but He has created a "free universe" where we (man and Satan) can create evil. God creates freewill. Freewill either chooses to create evil or chooses to create good. Evil then is a necessary potential outcome wherever true freedom exists. Love is also a necessary potential outcome wherever true freedom exists. Thus, we along with Satan are the true creators of evil.

IX. **Blessed Question Number Eight: How does good and evil operate?**

- A. The New Testament way of understanding how good and evil operate is as follows:
1. God was and is all powerful.
 2. God created angels and men with free will.
 3. God gave dominion of the earth to man. With this dominion, **God created two key laws of the spiritual universe: the law of mercy (love) and the law of sowing and reaping (judgment).** The law of mercy is God's active presence in the world. Sowing and reaping is man's active role in co-creation; our freewill in action; our dominion exercised for better or worse. Like the law of gravity interacts with the laws of lift and thrust in the physical world, the laws of mercy and sowing\reaping interact in the spiritual world. God's law of mercy is always the place to start.
 - a. Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! **Jas. 2:13.**
 - b. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. **2 Pet. 3:8-9.**
 - c. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. **1 Cor. 10:13.**
 4. Man is free to use his dominion power through sowing and reaping to essentially write his own ticket (of blessing and righteousness) or his own obituary (of sin and death).
 5. Man's dominion over the earth is proclaimed all over the scriptures.
 - a. **And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male**

and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Gen. 1:26-31.

- b. **And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.** And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. **And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.** And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. Gen. 2:19-25.
- c. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but **the earth hath he given to the children of men.** Ps. 115:16.
- d. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;** because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. Jn. 14:12-14.
- e. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. Mk. 11:23-24.
- f. Do ye not know that **the saints shall judge the world?** and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? **Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things**

that pertain to this life? 1 Cor. 6:2-3.

- g. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, **What is man, that thou art mindful of him?** or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. **Heb. 2:3-11.**
- h. Therefore let no man glory in men. For **all things are yours;** Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. **1 Cor. 3:21-23.**
- i. And the **God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet** shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. **Rom. 16:20.**

B. Sowing and reaping is the key to everything. It is how man exercises dominion. It is also how man fails to exercise dominion. What we are, what we have and what we become all are due to sowing and reaping.

- 1. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. **Gen. 1:11-12.**
- 2. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. **Gen. 8:22.**
- 3. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be

weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Gal. 6:7-9.

4. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? (referring to the parable of the sower). . . . And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. Mk. 4:13,26.
 5. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Pet. 1:23.
 6. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Matt. 7:1-2 (Jn. 7:24).
 7. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Lk. 6:38.
 8. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses. Mk. 11:25-26.
 9. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2 Cor. 9:6.
 10. Sow to yourselves in righteousness. Hos. 10:12.
 11. According to your faith be it unto you. Matt. 9:29.
 12. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Matt. 16:27.
 13. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Matt. 26:52.
 14. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Rev. 13:10.
- C. The two rivers of sowing and reaping: sin and death v. spirit and life. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** hath made me free from **the law of sin and death**. Rom. 8:1-2.

1. Sin and death:

- a. Sin is "whatever is not from faith." (Rom. 14:23).
- b. "Death" in the Hebrew speaks to various degrees of separation in relationship. Sin is relational in that it separates us from God. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Eph. 4:18.
- c. Sin causes God's protective presence (the law of mercy) to be tested and ultimately diminished as our shield if we fail to repent and properly apply the blood of Jesus to the sin. (1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 12:11). God extends His mercy to protect all men, "upholding all things by the word of His power." Heb. 1:3. This protection is limited because God will not violate our free will. If we choose and choose and choose and choose sinful (faithless) ways, God's protective mercy must lessen and lessen and lessen and lessen. To choose sin is to sow sin and sin will bring a progressive harvest of evil. God's mercy will weaken it, delay it, resist it, and give us every chance and opportunity to repent our way out of it, but: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Gal. 6:7-8.

God's mercy is more powerful than man's sowing and reaping, which is the only reason we all are still here. Yet God's mercy cannot continue to protect men if they continually refuse to face the truth and consequences of their heart decisions. The ancient philosophers rightly taught that choice becomes habit, habit becomes character, and character becomes being. At this point, they have lost their ability to choose otherwise because they have become their choices. "Their choices were now choosing them. Their becoming had now become their being. Their libertarian freedom, in which they could have chosen otherwise, had now become compatibilistic freedom, in which they could choose only according to the solidified character they had freely acquired. Thus, God had no choice but to give up on them. For Paul, this divine abandonment is the execution of God's wrath. He lets rebel people have their way. 'Therefore God, gave them up [paradidōmi] in the lusts of their hearts . . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie. . . . For

this reason God gave them up to degrading passions Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind.' (Rom. 1:24-26,28)" (Satan and the Problem of Evil, pg. 355, Gregory A. Boyd). **Gave them up to whom?**

- (1) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. **1 Jn. 3:8.**
- (2) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: **1 Pet. 5:8.**
- (3) We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. **1 Jn. 5:19.**
- (4) It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, **In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** **1 Cor. 5:1-5.**
- (5) Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; **whom I have delivered unto Satan**, that they may learn not to blaspheme. **1 Tim. 1:20.**
- (6) And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; **And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.** **2 Tim. 2:24-26.**
- (7) Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:** But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. **Lk. 22:31-32.**

- (8) But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, **To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts 26:16-18.

The above verses establish that Satan is the God of this world, that he destroys the lives of men who **reject, neglect or unselect** God's protective presence by wilfully sinning (living faithlessly), and that Satan, not God, is the immediate and primary cause of harm to men.

- D. Satan is involved in every sin we commit on some level. Satan, not God, tempts man. Man is drawn away by his own lust (lust of the eyes; lust of the flesh; pride of life; 1 Jn. 2:16). Man freely chooses enticement (i.e. to fulfill the lust). Man's lust conceives with Satan's temptation, sin is born (sown) and death (separation from God) will be progressively reaped as sin becomes full-grown. (Until it becomes full-grown, we still have space to repent).
1. "Disease (physical, spiritual, mental or emotional) is the foul offspring of its father, Satan, and its mother sin." John Alexander Dowie.
 2. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted (peirazo: to test, entice, discipline, prove, tempt, try. Strong's #3985), no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jas. 1:12-17.
 3. Consider Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3) and Jesus in the wilderness (Lk. 4:1-13). The first Adam chose sin and death by conceiving (co-creating) with Satan. The second Adam chose spirit and life by conceiving with (co-creating) with God.
 4. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." 1 Jn. 3:8; and is a "murderer from the beginning" Jn. 8:44. (Consider Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); Judas (Lk. 22:3); Peter (Lk. 22:31-32); 2 Tim. 2:24-26.

5. If everything Jesus did or said came from His first seeing or hearing the father say or do it (Jn. 5:18-19,30), then does everything else come from men first seeing or hearing Satan do or say it? Before we come to know God, we are either servants or sons of the Devil. Servants of the devil are those enslaved to sin (faithless living), even though they may hate it. (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 7:14-25). Sons of the devil are those who have so hardened their hearts with pride (religious or secular), that they have totally rejected truth, instead wilfully embracing lies and having been given over to a reprobate mind. (Jn. 8:31-59, esp. 42-45; Rom. 1:18-32). With each sin sowed, our hearts get harder and harder as Satan's unholy spirit seeks to build strongholds in us which cement our character in unbelief. A single sin in the beginning is mostly us and a little Satan. But as we continue to wilfully choose that same sin, it become less and less us and more and more Satan. Ultimately, the stronghold is complete and we are literally enslaved to Satan in this area of our life, having lost our freewill in the matter. At this point, we need deliverance from the demonic to recapture our freewill. God can grant this through giving us the supernatural strength of repentance, or we may receive prayers of deliverance from others. 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Jas. 5:13-16.

6. Neither give place to the devil. Eph. 4:27. Sin and death give Satan greater and greater access to attack and afflict us with the curses of Deuteronomy 28: sin, sickness, oppression, depression, poverty, lack, strife, failed marriages, failed parenting, failed work and failed ministry. Picture complete death, which is complete separation from God, as a salami. Satan, if he could, would shove the entire salami log down our throats so we would die to God right here and now. The law of mercy keeps Satan from being able to do this all at once. However, in areas of sin (faithlessness) Satan is able to feed us small slices of the salami of death. These small slices are curses which can affect us in various areas of our life where we are not submitted to God. These curses can cause continuing problems by afflicting us and retarding our spiritual growth. If we consume enough of the salami slices of death, then we can have major problems, strongholds and disasters. The good news is that the word of God and the blood of Jesus are just a faith-cry away. (Rev. 12:11; 1 Jn. 1:7). Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal. 3:13-14.

- E. Satan, not God, has the power of death. God moves only in life: the giving of it, the renewing of it, and the preservation of it. (Jn. 10:10).
1. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that **through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.** Heb. 2:14.
 2. The **last enemy** that shall be **destroyed is death.** 1 Cor. 15:26.
 3. The **sting of death is sin**; and the **strength of sin is the law.** 1 Cor. 15:56.
 4. For which cause we faint not; but **though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. 4:16-17.
 5. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For **as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.** But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. **The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.** For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.** But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. 15:21-28, 51-58.
 6. Wherefore, **as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,** even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. **For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)** Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many

were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 5:12,14,17-19,21.

7. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who **shall deliver me from the body of this death?** I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom. 7:18, 22-25.
8. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. **And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.** Rom. 8:14-23.
9. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From **henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.** Heb. 10:12-13.
10. Death is defined as separation from God's presence. Just as when we draw near to God, God draws near to us; so too, when we withdraw from God, His presence withdraws from us. This reflects a divine law of attraction and repulsion based on what we sow. (Jas. 4:8). In any death, God's protective presence is withdrawn and the physical body is killed by Satan, the Lord of death. For the Christian, this death is gain because as God withdraws His protective presence completely from our physical bodies, our spirits leave with Him and enter into paradise. However, the goal, unless we are called to voluntary martyrdom, is to maximize our length of days upon the earth. Even though our physical bodies are wasting away and dying because of the fallen world, God's mercy and our sowing and reaping can combine to fulfill our potential length of days. If we neglect to sow

the promises of God which promise long life (Ps. 91:16; Pr. 9:11; 10:27; Dt. 6:2; 4:40; 22:7; 5:16,33; 11:9), and if we neglect to act in wisdom in agreement with the promise we are standing on (i.e. holiness, diet, exercise, rest), then we are giving ground to Satan to take our life prematurely. God's mercy will offer limited levels of protection against sickness and death, but without our positive sowing to the spirit we will not maximize our days. Again, were God's mercy to grant us deathless lives regardless of our sowing and reaping, then our freewill would be violated. Also remember that the secondhand negative sowing of others may adversely impact us if we are not girded and vigilant. Also remember that Satan is shooting missiles of sickness and accusations toward us continually. If we fail to keep our shield of faith up, those missiles can shorten our days. Of course, the lives of saints are precious to the Lord. His mercy is available at different degrees on different levels. First, God's mercy is present at the optimum level of complete deliverance, where we bountifully sow to the spirit by faith and release complete healing. His mercy is also present at lower levels where bountiful sowing to the spirit has not occurred. If we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. Nonetheless, if the faith isn't sown to reap a full healing, God's mercy can still operate to sooth the dying, to comfort them, to grant them peace, to lessen their pain, etc.

God's mercy and faithful man's sowing and reaping combine to fully release God's saving power. This saving power forms a protective and energizing shield around the faithful. This shield has been called "Job's hedge" (Job 1:10), "the secret place of the most high" (Ps. 91:1), and the "full armour of God" (Eph. 6:13-17). Jesus lived in this protective shield continually because he bountifully sowed righteousness for the first thirty years of His life. His three-year ministry was His harvest. Consider this: the religious Jews sought to throw Jesus off a cliff "But passing through the midst of them he went away" (Lk. 4:28-30); "sought to destroy Him" (Lk. 19:14); they sought to stone him but he escaped "through the midst of them, and so passed by." (Jn. 8:59); "sought to kill him" (Jn. 7:1); sought to slay him (Jn. 5:16); sought to capture him "but he escaped out of their hand" (Jn. 10:39); and manhunted him continually (Jn. 11:57). Yet, Jesus' enemies could not penetrate His divine hedge until Jesus willingly laid His life down by taking our sins to bear on the cross. Isn't it remarkable that all His enemies were out canvassing to kill Him, but Jesus continued to minister out in public places right under their noses. They couldn't gain access to Him because of His Holy

Ghost force shield. He could boldly say as the end approached, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." (Jn. 14:30). Jesus even was forewarned about Judas' betrayal so that it could have been avoided. Jesus chose for the hedge to be removed. When an army of soldiers came to arrest Jesus, He told His disciples that, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. 26:53. What a wonderful scripture for the power of prayer! But having this power at His disposal, Jesus chose to not exercise it so that he could lay His life down for us. No man or devil took it from Him. (Jn. 10:18). Consider that as Jesus faced death, the Father's protective presence fully left Him as He yielded up the ghost, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46-50.

- F. Even though God won't violate our freewill, it does appear that man has no such reservation or limitation. Hitler violated the wills of millions of innocents by enslaving and ultimately killing them. Americans did it to slaves and Indians. Most everybody has done it to most everybody else. Husbands do it to wives and wives to husbands, parents to children and children to parents, friends to friends and enemies to enemies. This is witchcraft and manipulation to control the will of another. True ministry to our family, friends and the world is ministering without violating the will of another. Exhorting the will of another is as far as we must go. To go farther by applying soulish pressure, condemnation, manipulation or intimidation will only result in failure. We will be held responsible for those whose wills we have violated. Frederick Douglas said that anyone who chains another also chains himself with the other end of the same chain. Our soul being chained to the soul of another is known as a "soul-tie." A soul-tie results in mutual bondage where both parties have lost some amount of "free will" in the relationship because of past toxic and unhealthy interactions. Repentance is the key to breaking "soul-ties."
- G. Sowing and reaping involve **self-executing judgments**. According to Black's Law Dictionary, Sixth Edition, self-executing judgments are "those requiring no affirmative action of the court or action under process issued by the court to execute them." In other words, it has already been decided what conduct triggers judgment automatically without the court having to take any new action. For example, a self-executing order to pay child support will trigger immediate arrest upon the parent upon his failure to pay. In other words, improper conduct triggers automatic consequences, illegal choices trigger automatic action, self-inflicted evil reaps self-destructive results. In the spiritual, God created sowing and reaping into the very fabric

of creation. This was to enable us to sow and reap righteousness as we "subdue" creation in God's name. Man was to use this spirit of justice to enforce judgments upon Satan and his demons. (Ps. 149:5-9). Instead, Satan stole this power from man to use against him. With the fall of man, sowing and reaping was hijacked and mutated into sin and death. Just as sowing to the spirit automatically "triggers" life, sowing to the flesh automatically brings death (separation from God). Only God's mercy keeps the death at bay so that we can choose to repent our way free. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. 2 Cor. 7:10-11. It is crucial to see that sowing and reaping is automatic, just like gravity. We are the ones who reap our own destiny which we have sown. God does not decide from moment to moment how He is going to punish our sowing. His moment to moment thoughts of love (the law of mercy) are on how to protect us and delay our reaping so that we may have space to repent. The reaping of our judgments are actually executed by Satan and his demons. Just as angels enforce blessings of life when we sow to the spirit, demons enforce curses of death (i.e. shove the salami down our throat) when we sow sin. Remember, Satan would kill us all now if he could, but God's law of mercy prevents this. Satan's only avenue to touch us comes from the law of sin and death. When we sin (live faithlessly), Satan has grounds to accuse us (Rev. 12:11) with curses (Dt. 28). If we repent and/or plead the blood, then Satan's demons are rebuked. If we don't repent and/or plead the blood, then the demons have access to afflict us. Only the law of mercy can help out at this point to delay or impede the full brunt of the curse.

1. Angels enforce the blessings of promised inheritance: righteousness, peace, joy, abundance, health, good relationships, good marriages, successful parenting, prosperity at work and anointed ministry. The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. Pr. 10:22. (Jesus' divine nature in us allows these blessings to be activated by angelic forces in our lives). Angels work in the following specific ways:
 - a. Angels protect man's right to freely choose;
 - b. Angels rescue the sinner who cries out to God;
 - c. Angels empower saints' confessions of faith;

- d. Angels keep hammer of curses from falling quickly;
 - e. See Heb. 1:4; Ps. 34:7; Ps. 91:10-11; Ps. 103:20.
2. Demons (elemental spirits) enforce the cursings of the law: fear, worry, depression, oppression, poverty, lack, strife, sickness, failed relationships, failed marriages, failed parenting, failed work and failed ministry. (Satan rules demons and enforces curses by the power of dominion Adam forfeited to Satan in the Garden). As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. Pr. 26:2. Demons work in the following specific ways:
- a. Demons enforce curses of the law listed in Dt. 28 (individual and collective)

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Gal. 3:10; For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Jas. 2:10;
 - b. Demons sow lies;
 - c. Demons entice men to sin;
 - d. 2 Cor. 10:4-7; Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Lk. 22:25-34; Acts 10:38; Gal. 4:1-9; Acts 26:15-18; 5:3; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11.
 - e. Consider the below verses as translated in the Revised Standard Version (the version most seminaries use because of its accuracy and scholarship): For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, . . . "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" – that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. . . . So with us; when we were children, we were **slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe**. But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir. Formerly, when you did not know God, **you were in bondage to beings that by**

nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?** Gal. 3:10,13-14; 4:3-9.

- f. Consider the following quotation regarding the above verses from the Jewish New Testament Commentary by David H. Stern: "Elemental spirits of the universe (the term is used again at v.9, also at Co. 2:8,20). We, both Jews and Gentiles, were slaves to them. Gentiles served these demonic spirits as gods. Jews, though knowing the one true God, were sometimes led astray by demonic spirits, including the demonic spirit of legalism. Jews served this spirit whenever they perverted the Torah into a legalistic system (3:23b&N). That Jews too were bound by demonic spirits is indicated in Ep. 2:3. See also vv. 8-10&N. Beings that in reality are non-gods, i.e., idols, are one species of elemental spirits (v. 3&N). The Gentiles to whom Sha'ul [Paul] is writing served them before they came to put their trust in Yeshua [Jesus]."
- g. Jesus absorbed all the curses of the law on the cross. When He did this, Jesus disarmed all demonic powers from their power source to afflict us - - the law and its curses. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Col. 2:13-15. It is only when we are bewitched to put ourselves back under the letter of the law that demons become re-armed and dangerous. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal. 3:1-2. This is why we must crucify our old man daily, so that the curses have no ground to return and afflict us. We are in danger anytime we return (or fail to abandon) natural thinking, letter of the law understanding, legalistic attitudes, precept living and ritualistic religion. These are the devil's doorways into our lives, so we must continually keep them bolted shut with the nails of the cross.
- h. At its root, the Old Testament law was God's revelation of the laws of sowing and reaping. Spirit = life = blessing. Sin =

death = cursing. The law is cursed when man tries to follow it with his own righteousness. This is always doomed to failure because of Gal. 3:10, 5:3 and Jas. 2:10 because to break any part of the law is to bring all its demonic curses into play. However, when we live by the indwelling righteousness of Christ (rather than our own righteousness), we cease from our own works and enter into God's rest. Heb. 5:10. At this point, the law is spiritual and no longer produces curses of death, but rather blessings of life. Rom. 7:14. All the Old Testament saints lived under the curses of the law because they lacked the indwelling righteousness of Christ. New Testament saints open themselves up to these same curses when we fail to put on the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:24.

- H. Beware secondhand reaping. Others' sowing can affect us if we are not girded against it. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. Jn. 4:37. Secondhand smoke can kill those nearby, even though they don't smoke. We may have warfare sown against us in the form of family curses, national curses, regional curses, and even curses from close friends or associates. These curses come from their sin, not ours, but we can be adversely affected if we are not diligent to keep our shields of faith up. David's sin allowed 70,000 Israelites to be killed by Satan. Also, consider Achan's sin as described in Joshua 7. Here, Achan secretly hid forbidden objects in his tent. This secret sin sowed by Achan resulted in all the Israelites reaping defeat and some even reaping death. If we fail to gird ourselves by sowing the protective promises of God (as in Psalm 91 and Ephesians 6), then we are left vulnerable and unprotected to the secondhand sowing of others. Our negative sowing can affect scores of other people, so we must be careful. Also, remember that Satan sows destructive seeds against us continually. We intercept them with our sowing of righteousness. If we don't sow righteousness, we don't intercept Satan's missiles and can suffer affliction from his "hits." In the warfare area, seeds become missiles. Eph. 6:16. Secondhand sowing is extremely complicated because right now billions of people are sowing sin (faithless living) and death on a personal level; different countries are sowing sin and death on national levels; cities are sowing sin and death on local levels; faithless religion is sowing false hope and bondage to billions; and Satan is sowing temptation (lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and the pride of life) to every person, group, organization and nation on every level. This worldwide sowing and reaping forms interference patterns from an infinity of variables. Yet, God's mercy combined with the righteous sowing and reaping of the body of Christ can

cut through all this interference in the wink of an eye, but only as we are fully persuaded as to the goodness of God. We must not get caught up and confused in the complexity of the cause of a particular curse. Jesus taught in Luke 13:1-6 that all who live faithlessly are vulnerable to Satanic attacks of premature death and destruction. He said our focus must be in repenting from all faithlessness rather than getting caught up in the hows and whys of certain disasters. Instead, we must focus on the simplicity of the solution: releasing the burden-removing and yoke-destroying anointing of God. (Is. 10:27).

- I. One key way to sow to the spirit is by confessing (speaking out loud) the promises for your life contained in the word of God. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Pr. 18:21. This process builds faith, releases faith, activates angelic power and increases our heart's intimacy with the Father. Remember the following scriptural wisdom about harvesting God's promises:
 1. All seeds produce after their own kind. Gen. 1:11-12; 8:22. Negative seed confessions of fear, doubt and despair will harvest defeat. Jas. 3:6. Positive word seed confessions will harvest victory. Prov. 18:20-21; Jsh. 1:8.
 2. Sow the seed continually into your own heart. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness" Hos. 10:12. In Mark 4:26-32, the man sows the word seed into his own heart soil and awaits for the full harvest. Though other men and women of God may sow some word seed into your heart, you should be the primary sower of your own heart soil.
 3. Sow bountifully and reap bountifully. 2 Cor. 9:6-11. Get the seed in the ground. Sow the word by saying it. Few word confessions bring few harvests. Many word confessions will bring multiple harvests.
 4. Sow continually no matter what the circumstances appear to be. Eccl. 11:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 4:19-21. Don't base your confessions on circumstances. Base your confession solely on the word of God. Is. 8:20. Circumstances will eventually bow to your confessions as your "jaws of life" deliver you from Satan's wreckage. You can literally talk yourself out of any situation through spirit- led confessions.
 5. Don't sow with mixed seed. Deut. 22:9. Don't sow word confessions one moment and fear or doubt the next moment. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the

sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Jas. 1:6-7. Confess the word only, unmixed with words of unbelief.

6. Don't let any dead thing fall on your seed once you have sown it. Lev. 11:37-38. A lifestyle commitment to word confession requires a new level of vigilance on your part. You cannot attend dead churches, listen to dead preachings/teachings and fellowship with faithless Christians. Their spiritual deadness will cover your seed and smother your confessions. Sin in your own life will also corrupt your seed. You must guard your sown seed against contact with any spiritually dead person, place or thing. Water your seed with faith filled relationships, teachings and meetings.
7. Keep your heart soil tilled. Hos. 10:12-13; Jer. 4:3-4; Prov. 4:20-24. Keep your heart tender and sensitive to the Lord's love and correction for your life. Let your heart continually abound in hope and expectancy through the power of the Holy Ghost. Rom. 15:13. Grow in kavanah (Hebrew word for "heart concentration.") Physics proves that the softer an object is the more sound it absorbs. In the spiritual, a soft heart can also absorb much more of the spoken word of God than a heart hardened by sin or unbelief. Heb. 3:12-14.
8. Perfected faith brings immediate harvest. Amos 9:13. As you first start sowing the word of God by faith confession, there will be a season of time between your confession and its fulfillment. As your faith matures through the development of your patience (joyful endurance), you are made perfect and entire. Jas. 1:2-4. At this point, you will be a manifest son of God (Rom. 8:19) walking in the Amos 9:13 anointing. At this level of great faith, your seed confessions will produce immediate harvests. Your reaping will overtake your sowing and you will walk in the fullness of your calling. The Roman centurion had this "great faith" which knew Jesus' confession would come to pass immediately. It didn't take Jesus coming to see the centurion's sick servant face to face. The centurion asked Jesus to "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Matt. 8:5-13. Our soul is like the Roman centurion yielding in faith to the power of Christ. The only difference is that the centurion spoke to Christ without, whereas our soul speaks to Christ within. The centurion asked Jesus to speak the word only. Our soul seeks for our indwelling Christ, our anointing in God, to speak the word only through our scriptural confessions. Perfect faith speaks under the

authority of the anointing and brings instant results.

9. Honor the Lord with the first fruits of all your harvest. Prov. 3:9-10. As your harvest comes in from your confessions, remember to honor the Lord immediately. Praise God with your lips and tithe on your increase with joy and thanksgiving. Don't forget the Lord in your time of prosperity. This is when your love for God is proven as pure and genuine because need isn't motivating your actions.
 10. Don't let the cares of the world "choke" your seed. A heart that fears, worries, covets or takes comfort in the ways of the world allows Satan to throttle its confession. Lu. 8:7,14. The Greek word for "choke" in these verses literally means to put both hands around the throat and strangle. A worldly heart strangles a man from confessing God's word in faith.
- J. "I want to emphasize that I make no decisions or attempt anything for God without doing two things:
1. Praying in tongues and receiving the interpretation as the apostle Paul did in 1 Cor. 14:13-15.
 2. Sowing my seed of faith, giving God something to work with to multiply into a miracle harvest to bring to pass His plan and purpose."

Oral Roberts, Still Doing the Impossible, p. 213.

The above quote is crucial to understanding how faith works. First, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. Praying in tongues, word meditation and word confession all prepare the heart to hear the "at this moment" will of God. Second, once we know the Lord's will, we now are able to sow a seed of faith to release God's grace to accomplish His will on the earth. We sow the word in faith by saying it. This activates our heart (Rom. 10:9-10) and releases angelic powers to perform it (Ps. 103:20). Third, our patience (joyful endurance) cultivates our seed and keeps our heart clear of weeds (the cares of this world). Jas. 1:3-5. As our seed grows, first comes the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear - - then the harvest is ready for our sickle. (Mk. 4:26-29). At first, our seed is small, but it grows and grows until it is larger and more powerful than anything else in its way (Mk. 4:30-32).

- K. Avoid the trap of becoming too caught up in the exact cause of a current evil

situation. Millions of factors could be working in combination to sow the harvest of destruction before us. Jesus only occasionally cited the source of a sickness or demon-possession. Once He cited the sin of the afflicted as a causative factor. Jn. 5:1-14. Another time He stated Satan as the cause. Lu. 13:11-16. Peter was clear that Satan was involved in every sickness and affliction: How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. Acts 10:38. Yet, on still another occasion (Jn. 9:1-7) Jesus stated that the cause was irrelevant and not due to the sin of the afflicted or his parents, "nonetheless let the glory of God be revealed" (literal translation of Jn. 9:3; "Grammatically 'hina phaneroo' could be construed as an imperative: 'Let the works of God be displayed in him!' For such a construction cf. Mk. 5:23; Eph. 5:33; 2 Cor. 2:7; possible Johannine instances are 14:31; 15:25; see C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom Book of NT Greek [Cambridge: Cup 1953] 144-145, with literature there cited, and N. Turner in Moulton's Grammar of NT Greek 3:95 . . ." World Bible Commentary, Vol. 36, George R. Beasley-Murray, Word Books (1987), p. 151.). Also consider the Contemporary English Version's translation of these verses: As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind since birth. Jesus' disciples asked, "Teacher, why was this man born blind? Was it because he or his parents sinned?" "No, it wasn't!" Jesus answered. "But because of his blindness, you will see God work a miracle for him." Jn. 9:1-3. Getting too caught up in the specific cause of the current affliction can cause blame, condemnation and shame to pollute the atmosphere resulting in faith not being released. This is not to say prior sin of the afflicted is never to be broached, but only if the Spirit wills it. The vast majority of healings Jesus ministered never involved specific sin being exposed, but rather focused on the release of God's glory. Let us likewise be glory-focused. Rather than looking back on what seed caused the evil harvest, we must hear God about what seed of faith is needed to sow salvation into the situation. Sometimes that seed will be repentance over some sin by the afflicted, and sometimes it will not. Jas. 5:14-16 seems to put this burden on the afflicted as to whether a particular sin should be confessed as a cause of the current illness. Our primary focus should always be on the "how" (to release healing) rather than the "why" (is the person afflicted). The healing is always in the "how," not the "why." It does not appear Jesus required repentance over sickness-causing sins before He would heal the afflicted. Of course all men need to repent for all sins, whether it be sooner or later. Yet, Jesus never made it a precondition for His healing glory to be released. However, repentance is crucial to keep the same or worse affliction from returning. (Jn. 5:14).

X. **Blessed Question Number Nine: What is the righteous suffering a Christian is called to experience?**

A. We are called to righteous suffering:

1. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. **Phil. 3:10.**
2. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. **1 Pet. 4:12,13,19.**
3. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. **Rom. 8:16-17.**

B. What is righteous suffering?

1. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for **he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin**; **1 Pet. 4:1.** (We are to arm ourselves with this purpose: suffering in the flesh = ceasing from sin).
2. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. **Heb. 12:4.** (Jesus suffered by resisting sin unto blood).
3. For in that he himself hath **suffered being tempted**, he is able to succour them that are tempted. **Heb. 2:18.** (Jesus' suffering came from resisting temptation).
4. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; **Heb. 5:8-9.** (Jesus learned obedience in hearing the Father on how to overcome temptation).
5. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but **was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.** **Heb. 4:15.** (Jesus overcame all the same temptations we face).

C. Righteous suffering is the pain we endure while actively resisting persecution (2 Tim. 3:12) and all forms of temptation: sin, sickness, sorrow, poverty,

oppression, fear, and all the other curses of Dt. 28. We encounter pain and discomfort while we fight to not give in to symptoms of sickness - - to get up out of bed, to press through the pain, to praise God regardless of our symptoms. We experience painful pressure from Satan as we fight to not give in to attacks of oppression - - at home, work and fellowship. Righteous suffering is not staying down for the count, giving up or giving in, and it is not accepting or accommodating sickness or oppression or disaster as God's will. (We must distinguish battle-scars from battle-wounds. Battle-scars are sources of our boasting in the Lord's past victories. A battle-scar is a former bondage which the Lord has now liberated. For example, my past addiction to pornography is now a battle-scar I can proudly show to demonstrate the Lord's complete deliverance in this area. A battle-wound, in contrast, is an area where we continue to suffer affliction and defeat. A battle-wound is an area where we desperately need to receive the Lord's healing.)

1. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. **2 Tim. 2:3-4.**
2. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **Jas. 4:7.**
3. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. **Rom. 6:6-7.**
4. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. **Rom. 6:12-13.**
5. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: **2 Tim. 2:11-12.**
6. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. **1 Tim. 6:12.**
7. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. **Matt. 11:12.**
8. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the

devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Eph. 6:10-17.

9. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Cor. 10:4-6.

10. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 1 Pet. 5:8-9.

D. Ongoing repentance is a key in righteous suffering. Repentance is the process whereby we wholeheartedly turn our beings from the spirit of the world (Satan) in a given area in our lives to the spirit of God. This is not a single event but a fluid process where we purge out all faithlessness. Consider the following verses on the process of repentance.

1. “. . . the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” Rom. 2:4.

2. The Holy Spirit convicts\convinces men “of sin, because they believe not on [Jesus].” Jn. 16:9 (unbelief is sin).

3. Repentance is a gift. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5:31.

4. Repentance is a broad but limited opportunity. And I gave her **space to repent** of her fornication; and she repented not. Rev. 2:21. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as **Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for **he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.** Heb. 12:16-17.

5. Repentance acknowledges truth. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will **give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth**; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. 2 Tim. 2:25-26.

6. Repentance breeds action. But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and **do works meet for repentance.** Acts 26:20.
7. Repentance is a process: For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that **ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.** 2 Cor. 7:10-11.
- a. Carefulness (in not repeating the sin and in submitting all things to God);
 - b. Clearing of ourselves (in not feeling condemned but in feeling the Lord's pleasure and light yoke);
 - c. Indignation (anger at Satan, sin and sickness);
 - d. Fear (awe of God and taking all things seriously);
 - e. Vehement desire (to live by faith in all situations);
 - f. Zeal (to fight back against Satan and for God);
 - g. Revenge (attacking and exterminating all areas of spiritual failure or weakness);
 - h. Remember, repentance is not just feeling sorry for a particular sin. Repentance is a putting away of faithless mindsets, fear-based emotions and lust-based activities. Repentance is needed whenever we "phase out" of communion with the Lord's Spirit. Repentance is gut-based resolve that enough is enough; God is our portion; we cast down our unbelief; we pick up our sword and faith and get back in the fight; our focus is regained; our love is rekindled; our strength renewed; and our relationship with God fully restored.
8. Consider Luke 13:1-5: There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye

repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. These difficult verses establish three truths:

- a. All who live faithlessly are vulnerable to Satanic attacks of premature death and destruction. It is not that the Galilaeans or the eighteen in the above passage were greater sinners than other Israelites. Jesus is saying that all who are unrepentant are exposed and vulnerable to demonic attacks of disaster, destruction and death. But what does "unrepentant" mean in this context? "Repentance" (Greek - "metanoia") literally means "to change the way one thinks." In other words, those who think wrong things about God leave themselves less than fully protected by their shields of faith. The maximum amount of protection our faith provides us comes from the "right thinking" we display as we continually cleave to and trust in the perfect goodness of God. All men must repent (change their way of thinking) toward God. This repentance certainly includes our personal sins. But, more than that, repentance requires that our minds be renewed in our thinking so that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).
- b. Godly repentance protects us from Satanic attacks of premature death and destruction. It allows us full access to the protective promises of Psalm 91 which are available only to those who abide in the secret place of the Most High God. Rest assured that Psalm 91 protection is only available for those who will receive it by faith. Wrong thinking on this point will dilute our shields of faith and open us up to demonic attacks.
- c. The blessed question is not what specific sins, sinners and devils caused a particular evil harvest, but rather what seeds of faith can we sow now to stop this current evil harvest and any future evil harvest. If we need specific causes, God will give specific words of knowledge\wisdom about it. But we should not harp on specific causes in our own thinking. This can lead to condemnation and blame shifting. Jesus did not relate these disasters to particular sins. Rather, He related the disasters to a lack of "right thinking" about God, a lack which leaves much of mankind in a vulnerable state of exposure to

devilish disaster.

9. Our repentance saves us from two judgments: Satan's present judgment and God's future judgment. All of our current afflictions come from Satan's authority forfeited to him by Adam. This is why Jesus called Satan the prince of this world. Jesus gave us the authority to take this dominion back from the evil judge. Repentance is a key we must use in defeating Satan by removing all access (sin\faithlessness) which gives Satan ground to afflict us. Satan will always attack us from without our gate. This is the hardness (pressure) all saints must endure and overcome. But, Satan only has grounds to penetrate our walls if we give him access. Once Satan is attacking from within our gates, we are in trouble and may be harmed by the curses of Dt. 28 (fear, oppression, depression, poverty, lack, sickness, strife, failed endeavors and failed relationships). Repentance drives Satan back outside our gates and allows our stronghold of righteousness to be re-established.

Repentance also protects us from God's future judgment. The Father does not currently judge man in any way. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Jn. 5:22-24. Paul likewise warned us: Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. 1 Cor. 4:5. All judgment by God is in the future (Matt. 25:31-46; Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:1-9; 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 20:12-15), and all judgment will be by Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom Who will render to every man according to his deeds. 2 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 2:6 (also see Jn. 5:22-25; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 4:5). Thus, repentance keeps us from Satan's current judgments and God's future and final judgment. For this reason, let us all become master repenters who act quickly and decisively.

XI. **Blessed Question Number Ten: How does God chastise us as His children?**

- A. God does not maim, kill or abuse us as punishment.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a

scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? **Lu. 11:11-13.**

B. He chastises and corrects us by his word:

1. Word purges and cleanses us.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and **every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it**, that it may bring forth more fruit. **Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. **Jn. 15:1-7.**

2. Word instructs, reproves and perfects.

All scripture is 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, throughly furnished unto all good works. **2 Tim 3:16-17.**

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. **2 Tim 4:2.**

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. **Titus 2:14-15.**

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. **1 Cor. 2:11-16.**

3. No correction = no sonship.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us

run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. **Heb. 12:1-11.**

4. **Blessed is the man chastised and taught by the word.**

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law. **Ps. 94:12.**

5. **God chastises our heart not our flesh.**

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? **Heb 12:9.**

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. . . . The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly. **Prov 20:27,30.** (i.e. God puts stripes on our spirits through word conviction as the father of our spirits, whereas earthly fathers put stripes on our flesh as the fathers of our flesh.)

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged 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.**

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. **Prov 16:2.**

The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts. **Prov 17:3.**

6. Example: Laodicea.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and **knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Rev 3:13-22. (This letter to the church at Laodicea was a word-chastening rebuke to their spirits.)

7. God does not use sickness, oppression, misfortune, disaster or evil circumstances to test, entice, discipline, prove, tempt or try us. He rescues us out of such circumstances. He shows us wisdom how to escape and avoid such circumstances in the future. He comforts us in the midst of afflictions. However, God does not plan, send, approve, or actively allow any misfortune to afflict us. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted (peirazo: to test, entice, discipline, prove, tempt, try. Strong's #3985), **no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;** but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. **Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jas. 1:12-17.

XII. **Blessed Question Number Eleven: What does the book of Job tell us about the battle of good and evil?**

- A. The New Testament instructs us to consider Job's end (Jas. 5:11): And the LORD turned the captivity of Job,. . . also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. . . . After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. . . . So Job died, being old and full of days. **Job.**

42:10,12,16,17. Remember this key: the book of Job is about how God turns the captivity of the righteous. Most scholars agree that "Job's captivity" lasted for nine months to a year. Both before and after, Job was the most prosperous man in the East. May we all finish our race as strong as Job. No, stronger than Job because we have the indwelling spirit of God whereas Job had the ondwelling spirit of God (Jn. 14:17).

- B. Job is generally taught to be the oldest book in the Bible. Interestingly, its first two chapters clearly delineate a heavenly courtroom where two opposing forces - - God and Satan contend for the soul of a righteous man - - Job. So it was then and so it is today - - the same court battle goes on for the soul of every man (Rev. 12:10). Satan's weaponry used against Job as revealed in Chapters One and Two include: nature (lightning: "fire from heaven"; tornado or storm: "great wind"), men (Sabeans and Chaldeans), and sickness ("boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown"). This is strong authority that Satan as the "prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) in whose power lies the whole world (1 Jn. 5:19 NIV) uses three key weapons to attack us: nature, man and sickness. Jesus rebuked a demonic storm, a Satanically controlled Peter, and thousands of demon spirits of infirmity.
- C. The book of Job is crystal clear that Satan, not God, was the source of Job's captivity. Job himself (and his friends) seemed completely ignorant of Satan's existence, input and activity in Job's captivity: the killing of his children and servants, the destruction of his flocks and the affliction of his flesh. Ignorance of the wiles of Satan leads to the mother of all mistakes: either blaming God directly for being evil, or accepting evil as part of God's will. The tragedy of the former is that it curses God and in the New Testament is comparable to blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:22-32). The tragedy of the latter is that it leaves saints defenseless and unable to resist Satan per 1 Pet. 5:8-9.
- D. Job never cursed God by blaming God for being evil. Rather, Job tried to honor God on some level by accepting evil as part of God's will. Although well intentioned, Job's view resulted in several inaccurate and unfair statements about God:

"And [Job] said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. . . . What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"
Job 1:21; 2:10.

Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Job 10:8.

For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. Job 10:16.

Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, . . . Job 10:20.

Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposes thyself against me. Job 30:21.

But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. Job 16:7-9.

He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. Job 30:19.

I call these type of whinings above "Job-speak." Many Christians talk this way continually. They attribute God as the agent of all their misfortune. Though they don't commit the sin of calling God evil, they wrongly label Him as the source of evil. "Job-speak" sounds religiously pious and longsuffering as the "noble" speaker "bears up" under the hard hand of God. However, "Job-speak" dumps all the blame for evil circumstances in the lap of God. Jesus never used "Job-speak." He never assigned evil (death, destruction, disaster, sickness, disability, oppression) to the will of God. Rather, Jesus always focused on evil as a result of Satan's wiles combined with men's unbelief. (Jn. 8:34-47; 10:10).

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 Jn. 3:8.

Charles Capps counted some 74 false accusations Job and his friends made against God regarding His being the primary source and agent of evil in the situation. Job repented over all these faithless statements when he finally beheld the true glory and goodness of God. Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. . . . Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Job 40:3-5; 42:3. Again, Job was a righteous man who was sincere in his beliefs, but sincerely wrong. Job did not "sin with his lips" or "attribute folly to God" by cursing God as evil, even though his wife encouraged him to do just that. (Job. 1:22; 2:9-10). Had Job said, "God is evil" or "I curse God for His foolishness," or "God is a fool," then Job would have sinned with his lips. Job remained faithful to this

concept: God knows best. What Job lacked understanding about, though, was how evil operates. Job assumed that because God is omnipotent (all-powerful), He is also omni-causative (that God directly and actively causes everything). Job attributed all events, good or bad, as coming from the sovereign will of God. Job and his friends lacked any knowledge of Satan, his power, his demons, his influence, his activity, his will and his schemes. Bottom line: Job wrongly assumed that everything that happened 24/7 was God's will. Jesus came to shed God's light on this wrong thinking: to teach us the Father's will is only good, to teach us all evil comes from man and/or Satan, to teach us we are not helpless but that we can resist Satan, to teach us we can rebuke Satan, to teach us we are not to go quietly into the night, to teach us God's will does not equal Satan's will, to teach us we are to crush Satan under our feet (Rom. 16:20), and to teach us to never throw our hands up in the air and say "Oh well, whatever happens to me must be God's will." Let us all resolve to remove all "Job-speak" from our conversations. Let it be replaced with "Jesus-speak," righteous lips which speak only faith words and good confessions.

- E. The book of Job never explains why Satan had access to penetrate God's protective "hedge" (Job 1:10). Why God allowed the hedge to be partially broken is not stated. Did God arbitrarily choose to lower Job's hedge so that He and Satan could have a friendly wager as to whether Job would curse God or not? Of course not! Does anyone think that God allowed Job's children and servants to be killed just to win a bet with Satan? No, there is something deeper going on here. God had to allow Satan access to attack Job. To see this, we must look at Job through the spirit-baptized eyes of the New Testament. First, the New Testament clearly teaches that Satan is able to harm us because we give him place to do so. (Eph. 4:27; Jn. 14:30; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Eph. 6:16). Satan "accuses" us and "our brethren . . . before our God day and night." Rev. 12:10. This point is consistent with Job 1-2 where Satan accuses Job before the Father in order to gain access to attack. The question in the Old Testament was unanswered as to what gave Satan legal access to actually harm Job, unanswered until the New Testament revealed the key to Satan's power to afflict all of us (including Job). That key is **fear**.
1. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through **fear of death** were **all their lifetime subject to bondage**. Heb. 2:14-15. ("Fear of death is the worm at the center of the core of all fear." William James).
 2. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have

not received **the spirit of bondage again to fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Rom. 8:14-15.

3. For God hath not given us **the spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1:7.
4. In righteousness shalt thou be established: **thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear**: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, **they shall surely gather together, but not by me**: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Is. 54:14-15.
5. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But **the fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Rev. 21:7-8.
6. Many people are not aware they have strongholds of fear. Many people struggle with non-stop panic or worry over various situations. Many people live in a constant dread about certain people, places or things. Many people are timid with their testimony, gutless with their faith, double-minded with their thoughts of God, tentative with their giftings, mistrustful of God's word, lazy in the spirit, and tormented by unforgiveness and bitterness. The result is that their high calling of Christ Jesus is being continually avoided, denied, and concealed with fig leaves of fear, pride, and shame. Fear is truly the mother of all negative emotions underlined above.

"It is reported that the newspaper counselor, Ann Landers, receives an average of 10,000 letters each month, and nearly all of them from people burdened with problems. She was asked if there was any one of them which predominates throughout the letters she receives, and her reply was the one problem above all others seems to be fear.

People are afraid of losing their health, their wealth, their loves ones. People are afraid of life itself."

Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Paul Lee Tan, ThD., #1641, p. 434.

In spite of what they say, 90% of the chronic patients who see today's physicians have one common symptom. Their trouble did not start with cough or chest pain or hyper acidity. In 90% of the cases, the first symptom was fear.

This is the opinion of a well-known American internist as expressed in a round table discussion on psychosomatic medicine. This is also the consensus of a growing body of specialists. Fear of losing a job, of old age, of being exposed – sooner or later

this fear manifests itself as 'a clinical symptom.'

Sometimes the fear is nothing more than a superficial anxiety; sometimes it is so deep-seated that the patient himself denies its existence and makes the round of doctor to doctor, taking injections, hormones, tranquilizers and tonics in an endless search for relief."

Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Paul Lee Tan, ThD., #1642, pp. 434-435.

"A nation-wide survey of more than 2,200 seven-to-eleven-year-olds, released by the private Foundation for Child's Development, indicated that most children feel good about their lives, their families and just being themselves. But many are also afraid.

More than two-thirds are scared that 'someone bad' is skulking about their neighborhood, waiting to break into their homes. A quarter of the children are afraid that they will be attacked when they go outside – with some justification, since more than 40% have been harassed by older kids or adults while playing. . . ."

Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Paul Lee Tan, ThD., #1645, p. 435.

". . . . A man who lived in terror of crocodiles was eaten by one 15 feet long with three legs and no tail near Weipa in far north Queensland.

An investigation into the death of Peter Reamers, 35, bared that he was so scared of crocodiles he never would wade in water more than a few inches deep. But the crocodile was aware of Reamers' habits and stalked him for days before it took him at the end of a hunting trip."

Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Paul Lee Tan, ThD., #1661, p. 438.

"In his sermon 'Fear,' Clarence E. Macartney describes a peasant, driving into a European city, who was hailed by an aged woman. As they drove along, the peasant became alarmed as he learned his passenger was the plague, cholera. But she assured him that only ten people in the city would die of cholera. She even offered the peasant a dagger, saying he could slay her if more than ten died. But after they reached the city, more than a hundred perished. As the angry peasant drew the dagger to deal a death blow, the plague lifted her hand and protested, 'Wait, I killed only ten. Fear killed the rest!'"

Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Paul Lee Tan, ThD., #1665, p. 439.

7. And his [Job's] sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in

their hearts. Thus did Job continually. . . . **For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.** Job 1:4-5; 3:25-26.

8. Job's fear gave Satan access to afflict him. Reading "between the lines" of Satan's demand to God reveals the heart of the dialogue was as follows: "God, I can't touch Job because you have hedged him with your favor. But look in Job's heart and smell his fear. He is fearful of losing his children, his possessions and health. If I can't attack Job as a consequence to his fear, then You have violated his free will. Job has given me place to attack him and I claim the right to execute the captivity." God responds, "You can launch the attack, but my servant Job will repent of his fear and ignorance, and you will be rebuked." Notice how similar this exchange is to Jesus' exhortation to Peter: And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Lu. 22:31-32. Job did ultimately repent for his "words without knowledge" (Job 38:2): Then Job answered the LORD, and said, **Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.** Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but **I will proceed no further.** . . . Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. **Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.** Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore **I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.** Job 40:3-5; 42:1-6. It is also interesting to note that Elihu, the only speaker whom God never rebuked, stated his frustration at Job's (and his friends') mischaracterizations when he vented the following words: **Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge** . . . Touching the almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: **he will not afflict.** Job 35:16; 37:23. God himself echoed Elihu's same frustration when he appeared to Job out of the whirlwind: Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy lions like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me Job 38:1-3.
9. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 1 Jn. 4:18. (Fear gives Satan place to torment us. Faith working by perfect love casts fear out of our lives. Gal. 5:6).

10. "I want you to promise the Lord that, from tonight, you will not think back, look back, or act back!" Smith Wigglesworth.

XIII. **Blessed Question Number Twelve: What does Paul's thorn in the flesh teach us about suffering?**

A. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, **there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me**, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. **Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you . . . This is the third time I am coming to you.** 2 Cor. 12:7-14; 13:1.

1. Satan brought Paul's thorn in the flesh (v. 7).
2. The thorn kept Paul from being too exalted (v. 7).
3. Paul prayed three times for the thorn to depart (v. 8).
4. God's answer to Paul was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (i.e. I've already given you the resources to deal with it. My ability begins where your ability ends.)
5. Paul was about to visit the Corinthian church for the third time (v. 14; 2 Cor. 13:1).
6. The Corinthian church had repeatedly challenged Paul's motives, standing and apostolic authority. (2 Cor. 10:1-2; 11:21-28; 12:11-15; 13:3; 1 Cor. 3; 4:1-4; 9).
7. Perhaps this whole episode indicates that Paul's messenger of Satan, his thorn in the flesh, consisted of all the evil reports Paul continued to get from the Corinthian church regarding their carnality, ingratitude and disobedience. Perhaps Paul struggled with their sinful defiance to the point where he asked to the Lord to remove their burden from

his ministry. God responded to Paul that His grace was sufficient for Paul to stay connected to Corinth as an apostle, to clean out their sin stables, and in his manly weakness Paul would be made perfect in Godly strength. What could be more difficult than ministering to people who doubt your motives, standing and authority - - who seem to only be able to know you after the flesh and not after the spirit?

- B. Even if the above analysis is wrong and Paul's thorn in the flesh was a continuing attack of some kind of physical ailment, this passage can't be used to claim such an attack is from God's will.
1. Again, Paul said the source was Satan, not God (2 Cor. 12:7).
 2. God's response was not, "No, Paul, I won't help you." Rather, it was, "Paul, I've already given you the grace to deal with it in my perfect strength. You need only receive it by acknowledging your weakness in your own ability. As you embrace my ability by forsaking your own, then the perfect power of the anointing will rest on you." Whatever the thorn was, God knew that Paul wanted a quick fix, as do we all, by seeking God to kiss the boo-boo to make it go away. But, God wanted a quality deliverance (from Satan, man or sickness) that soaked down deep into Paul's character. In fact, Paul stated that Satan's access to afflict him came from Paul being in danger of becoming "exalted above measure" through the abundance of the [third heaven] revelations. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 2 Cor. 12:7. Again, this seems to indicate an attack on Paul's character rather than an attack on his body, but regardless, Paul wanted to leave this battlefield behind. Whereas Paul was tired of this battle, God responded, "This is the battlefield I have called you to. Keep fighting and you will prevail. You don't need reinforcements. Just use the resources I've already give you. Your character, fortitude and anointing will all greatly benefit. And you will be a much better man for it because you know and depend on my spirit more than ever."
 3. In 2 Cor. 12:10, the word "infirmities" (Strong's #s 769 and 770) means "weaknesses" and is used primarily by Paul to refer to "natural limitations in man's abilities." (See Rom. 4:19; 6:19; 8:3, 26; 14:1-2; 1 Cor. 8:11-12; 2 Cor. 11:30; 12:5, 9, 10; 13:4; all these verses refer not to physical sicknesses, but rather to weaknesses in man's ability to accomplish the righteousness of God). Where man's abilities end

is where God's ability begins. As God is given free reign in our lives, He then re-energizes and renews our natural ability with His supernatural ability. If Paul were referring to physical sicknesses, it surely seems he would have mentioned them a chapter earlier in 2 Cor. 11:23-30 where he details what his "infirmities" were: Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 2 Cor. 11:23-30. On this list were labors, stripes, prisons, deaths of those around us, beatings, stoning, shipwreck, perils of water, perils of robbers, perils by countrymen, perils by heathen, perils in the city\wilderness\sea, perils by false brothers, weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness and the care of all the churches. These "infirmities" weren't to be accepted as God's will. Paul rejoiced in these infirmities not because they brought him continual defeat in his ministry, but because He knew God's power was free to be released in full measure to bring victory. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Rom. 8:37. God supernaturally delivered Paul out of each of these trials, each in a different way, but all bringing maximum impact of God's glory in the situation.

Paul's suffering through these "infirmities" always led to a supernatural release of God's power to deliver Paul from Satan while at the same time fully delivering the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul didn't give in or give up because of these infirmities: he resisted and resisted and resisted and resisted them with the power of God. He gloried in the affliction, not because of it: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thes. 5:19. We are to give thanks not for everything (including afflictions) but in everything (including afflictions). This is entirely consistent with James' view: My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Jas. 1:2-4. It is also consistent with Heb. 6:12: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The Greek word

"thlipsis" is translated in the New Testament as "affliction," but it literally means "pressure." (Strong's #2347). Satan's pressure on our lives through afflictions eventually renders our natural abilities useless. Satan seeks to destroy us in this state of weakness by crippling our faith, hope and love. But, God sees this state of weakness as a place of brokenness and trust where we can draw closer to Him and receive a fuller measure of grace. (1 Pet. 1:13). This process works patience (joyful endurance) in our character, so that we can rule and reign as champion sons of God. In our gritty and gutty resistance to Satan's pressure (persecution, temptation, sickness, oppression, depression, failure) our character develops patience (joyful endurance) which when mixed with our faith releases the anointing of power.

4. But wasn't Paul a martyr? God didn't deliver him out of that affliction, did he? Doesn't that mean it's good to die young? Why didn't Psalm 91 work for Paul? All these questions misunderstand what a true martyr is. A martyr is not someone whose life is taken from him. A martyr is someone who voluntarily lays his\her life down by refusing to accept the Lord's deliverance in the situation because his\her death would have maximum impact at this point in time. Nobody took Paul's life without his consent. The Holy Spirit gave him plenty of advance notice of what dangers awaited him at Jerusalem, yet Paul freely embraced the martyr's death (Acts 21:10-14). And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and **others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:** Heb. 11:32-35. Paul had the faith to be delivered out of any peril, but he chose to lay his life down for maximum impact at the time of greatest exposure (as revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit). Samson, for example, laid his life down at the point of maximum impact where he could slay a stadium full of enemies. He killed more enemies in his death than he killed his entire life (Jdg. 16:30). The Lord shows many of His beloved sons the point in time when their sacrifice can cause the most damage to Satan and bring the most glory to God. They then freely choose to lay their life down and obtain a better resurrection.

5. Consider Agnes Sanford's view of Paul's thorn in the flesh:

"What about St. Paul and his thorn in the flesh?"

St. Paul's thorn in the flesh has become a veritable thorn in the spirit to thousands of Christians, who take St. Paul as an example for cherishing illness. In this they are not consistent. If St. Paul were really their example, they could raise the dead. For in seeing him as an example, of the invalid saint, they do the utmost violence to the Biblical picture of a man strong enough to endure shipwreck and exposure, stoning and imprisonment and still accomplish more than ten ordinary men could.

Behold the impressive roll-call of saints given in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Is there a weakling among them? Noah, who in his five hundredth year built an 'ark' the size of a modern cargo ship; Moses, who at the age of one hundred and twenty stated that his eyes were not dim nor his natural strength abated; Elijah, who girded up his loins and outran the king's chariot horses; David, who slew a lion and a bear with his bare hands. There is no record in the whole Bible of a holy man who remained an invalid. Stories of illnesses we find, but these stories are almost funny in the portrayal of a tremendous urge toward health. The prostrated holy men were outraged at illness, regarding it as a sign of being cut off from God's love and cast out of His presence. From David (who made his couch to swim with his tears) to Job (who sat upon a dung-heap and cried unto the Lord till he recovered) we find no instance of an acceptance of illness as the will of God. . . .

St. Paul had been miraculously healed more than once. He had shaken off a deadly serpent and felt no sting whatsoever from its bite. He had been stoned and left for dead, and had risen from under a pile of stones and walked into the city. He had accomplished the most amazing of miracles, even the raising of the dead. Yet, toward the end of his ministry, he was troubled by a 'thorn in the flesh.' He prayed about this matter and God said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'

He did not receive an instantaneous healing. Instead of that, he received every day enough of the Grace of God for that day's needs. So do I. And if God's perfect strength accomplished through me as much as it did through St. Paul, I would be well content."

The Healing Light, Agnes Sanford.

6. God doesn't promise we won't have affliction (demonic pressure). But He does promise we can always overcome it. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. **Jn. 16:33.** Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. **Rom. 8:37.** Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. **1 Jn. 4:4.** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. **1 Jn. 5:4.** Jesus clearly taught that this life of an overcomer was to be experienced in this life and not just in heaven. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. **Mk. 10:28-30.** The Lord's deliverances work in different ways at different times. Mark 16:18 promises poison and snake bites (i.e. afflictions) won't harm us. Sometimes we are warned in advance of the snake or poison so we can avoid it. Other times, the snake bites us or the poison enters our system. At these times, our faith keeps us from being harmed by the poison\venom. God didn't promise we would never be bitten by affliction, but He did promise we would never be harmed by it if we fight the good fight of faith. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **Lk. 10:19.**

XIV. **Blessed Question Number Thirteen: What is the truth about divine healing?**

- A. Jesus bore our sins and sicknesses on the cross. Ps. 103:1-5; Is. 53:1-6 (In verse 4, the literal Hebrew for "griefs" = diseases and "sorrows" = pain); Matt. 8:16-17 (Note that Jesus healed physical sickness here in fulfillment of Isaiah, not just spiritual sickness); 1 Pet. 2:24 (Note the past tense "by his stripes ye were healed", pointing to the past and completed work of the cross). We should not pray for God to heal us because Jesus already provided healing on the cross. Rather, we should pray in faith to receive the Lord's healing already accomplished two thousand years ago. Consider Ephraim (Israel) in Hos. 11:3 whom God had already healed, but they knew it not. In the same way, all the saints have been healed today, through God's provision at the cross, but many know it not and never receive it by faith. A million dollar check in our pocket will never do us any good until we

make a demand to cash it. Similarly, the healing promises of God must be presented by our faith, endorsed by our confession and cashed by our actions. The Holy Spirit's role is continually convincing us that we truly possess the million dollar check of healing and deliverance. (1 Cor. 2:12; Jn. 16:7-15).

- B. Jesus healed all who were oppressed by the devil except those who refused or were unable to receive through unbelief. (Acts 10:38; Mk. 6:1-6).
- C. Jesus commissioned believers to walk in the same healing anointing that He had. (Jn. 14:10-14; Mk. 16:17-18; Lk. 10:1,9,17-19; Matt. 10:1, 7-8; Jas. 5:15).
- D. Faith which is released and received will always heal the sick. (Jas. 5:14-15; Mk. 11:22-24; Matt. 21:22; Mk. 9:23; Acts 14:8-10).
- E. It is God's nature to heal (Ex. 15:26, Jehovah Ropheka, "the Lord that healeth thee", Ex. 23:25; Mal. 4:2; Pr. 9:11; Acts 10:38), and that same nature is in us. (Col. 1:27).
- F. Sickness is a curse which comes from Satan and healing is a blessing which comes from God. (Jn. 10:10; Ps. 107:20; Acts 10:38; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 5:5; Lu. 13:16; Prov. 10:22). "Woe to those who call evil (sickness) good (from God) and good (healing) evil (from Satan)". (Is. 5:20). Calling sickness evil allows us to resist it with the same intensity as we resist sin. Calling sickness good keeps us from fighting it.
- G. Consider Jesus' ministry (Lu. 4:18-19):
 - 1. Jesus never put sickness on anybody to test or teach them. Jesus destroyed sin and sickness. (1 Jn. 3:8);
 - 2. Jesus never said no to anybody who came to him for healing. (Acts 10:38). This shows His will is to heal all who come to Him in faith. Jesus said that He and the Father are one and when you see Jesus you see the Father. Thus, we know the Father's heart for healing is the same as Jesus' heart. (Jn. 10:30; 14:7);
 - 3. Jesus acknowledged that Abraham's seed should be healed (Luke 13:16), whose seed we are if we are of faith (Gal. 3:6-7,13-14, 29). All scholars agree that God had a healing covenant with Israel (Dt. 7:12-15), and our covenant through Jesus is a "better covenant"

(Heb. 8:6) which in the Greek literally means a stronger covenant. Our covenant of healing is even stronger than was Israel's;

4. If God puts or allows sickness on men, then Jesus couldn't have healed as He did. He said that Satan can't cast out Satan because a house divided cannot stand. Jesus couldn't cast out sickness if God put it on men or He would be a divided house. It would be God casting out God (Mk. 3:22-29).

H. Consider the Heavenly Father:

1. He is not a child abuser who puts diseases on His children or neglects them to death. (1 Jn. 1:5; 3:1; 4:8);
2. If earthly fathers know how not to expose their children to dangerous conditions (warm clothing for cold weather, avoidance of disease ridden areas, healthy food for hunger), how much more does the heavenly Father know how to protect his children from Satan if they will receive in faith His provision of protection. (Lu. 11:10-13; Jas. 1:6).

I. God's provision for healing is always available but not always received due to:

1. Unbelief (ours or those around us) (Mk. 6:1-6);
2. Unconfessed sin (Jas. 5:13-16);
3. Unconfessed faith (Mk. 11:22-24; Prov. 18:21, we must speak to the mountain of sickness, not just about the mountain of sickness);
4. Undeveloped faith (Jn. 8:31-32, we must continue in His Word to be set free; 2 Pet. 1:3-8, we must add to our faith diligence (speed), virtue (manliness or valor), knowledge (of the word), temperance (to be strong in a thing, to temper is to form to a proper degree of hardness), patience (joyful endurance), godliness (Christ likeness), brotherly kindness (affection), charity (Godly love); Hos. 4:6, God's people perish for lack of knowledge);
5. Unforgiveness (Mk. 11:24-26);
6. Unfulfilled conditions (Prov. 26:2);

- a. Tithing (Mal. 3:6-18);
- b. Laying hands (Mk. 16:17-18);
- c. Elders & anointing oil (Jas. 5:14-15); and
- d. Communion (1 Cor. 11:23-30).

WARNING: Don't use the fact of Christians who don't get healed as proof that God refused to heal them. That is as illogical as claiming that Jesus didn't redeem us from sin because Christians can still sin after salvation. We must not walk by sight but by faith. (2 Cor. 5:7). A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Ps. 91:7.

Saints do fail to get healed for a variety of reasons. But, it is never God's refusal to heal that is the source. God is always ready, willing and able to fulfill his healing promises for all believers. Failed healings are due to failed men, failed faith, failed teachings, failed endurance, failed confession, failed diligence or failed agreement. The most common failure is our refusal in not attacking the sickness as a body of like-minded faith warriors. Instead, we suffocate the sick with our unbelief and inactivity.

XV. Blessed Question Number Fourteen: What is the wrath of God?

- A. We know what the wrath of God is not. The wrath of God is not at all like the wrath of man.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Jas. 1:20.

Jesus never used the term "the wrath of God," and in fact only used the word "wrath" one time to refer to the forthcoming sack of Jerusalem by the Romans. (Lk. 21:23). Nor is the term "the wrath of God" ever used in the book of Acts where the foundations of the church were laid by the apostles in their many recorded sermons and discourses. Jesus taught that human wrath is evil and must be overcome by love and forgiveness. (Matt. 5:38-48; Mk. 11:25). If the wrath of God is a somewhat rare topic in the New Testament, not so the wrath of man. We overcome evil with good - - and only God is good. (Rom. 12:21; Matt. 19:17). God overcomes evil with good and so must we. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13). God's current wrath against sin is to overcome it with His goodness so that men everywhere will repent. (Rom. 2:4). God hates sin, not sinners.

B. **The wrath of God is the reluctant but forced withdrawal of God's protective presence from any situation where God's will has been continually rejected, neglected or unselected.** We must see that the Holy Spirit, as God's protective presence in this world, may be "grieved" or "quenched" by our faithless living. (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19). This results in God's reluctant but forced withdrawal from the situation. God's absence in any situation produces the presence of wrath. Wrath is a state of torment where we are given over to our own lustful desires and to the power of Satan. "In the New Testament, the Greek words for wrath, *orgē* and *thymos*, are basically interchangeable." I believe that Paul understands the wrath of God not as "emotional in nature (affective)," but as "the necessary consequence of a holy God encountering sin (effective). Any solution . . . must exclude any notion of malicious or capricious anger on the part of God. C. H. Dodd, noting that, 'Paul never uses the verb, 'to be angry,' with God as a subject and that wrath when used of God is 'curiously impersonal,' propounded the influential view that wrath is not a certain feeling or attitude of God toward us, but some process or effect in the objective realm of facts.' In other words, wrath is the inevitable result, or consequence, of human sin in a moral universe - - a calculable effect of certain behaviors or attitudes - - and not the activity of God against sinners. [i.e. sowing and reaping] Paul's argument is that no one remains untouched by sin (Rom. 3:23) and therefore whether it is a matter of Jew or Greek, none is righteous (Rom. 3:9-10) and thus all are liable to the wrath of God [i.e. the law of sowing and reaping]. Indeed in Ephesians the readers in their pre-Christian state were 'disobedient' and 'by nature children of wrath,' a Hebraic way of indicating a class of people doomed to suffer God's wrath" [i.e. sowing sin and reaping the cursings of the law listed in Dt. 28]. Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, edited by Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid, I.V.P., pp. 991-992 (1993). [Note: C. H. Dodd was one of the most influential theologians of the last century. He was an Oxford professor and headed the committee which translated the New English Bible.]

For Paul, divine wrath was the "giving over" of the unrepentant sinners to the following: "the lusts of their own hearts" (Rom. 1:24); their own "vile affections" Rom. 1:26); their own "reprobate mind" (Rom. 1:28); and to "Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5; also see 1 Tim. 1:20; Lk. 22:31-32; 1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Not only has humanity turned to idolatry, but also to sexual infidelity and perversion. The clause 'gave them over' (Gk. *paredwken*) does not mean that God compelled people to sin. Although this clause has caused considerable debate, the most common interpretation, which has prevailed since the time of Origen and Chrysostom, views *paredwken* in a permissive sense. This means that God passively permitted men to fall into the retributive consequences of their infidelity and apostasy. . . . Note also that this term was used to

describe God's dealing with Israel in handing them over to other nations as punishment for their disobedience. It is not as if God actively caused the Israelites to be defeated or that he forced enemy armies to attack and destroy them. **Rather, in response to Israel's rebellion and rejection of Him as their God, God obliged by actively withdrawing His protection, and therefore, passively allowing Israel's enemies to destroy and plunder them.**

C. H. Dodd writes: **the disastrous progress of evil in society is presented as a natural process of cause and effect, and not as the direct act of God. . . The act of God is no more than an abstention from interference with their free choice and its consequences.**

Again, it appears that God apparently removes His active restraining influence and allows people to do exactly as they please. This is a form of punishment in the sense that being left to please one's self in choosing evil brings its own penalty (v. 27). For example, infidelity leads to mistrust and marriage break-down, promiscuity often results in unwanted pregnancy, or the contraction of venereal diseases, or even AIDS. Indeed, Harvard sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin, in his book *The Crisis of Our Age*, warned that increases in crime, suicides, mental breakdowns, revolutions, and war are the symptoms of a dying civilization. In another article on homosexuals in *Time* magazine he wrote, 'At their fullest flowering, the Persian Greek, Roman and Moslem civilizations permitted a measure of homosexuality; as they decayed, it became more prevalent.' In another book, *The American Sex Revolution*, he pointed out that sex anarchy has led to mental breakdowns, rather than the other way around, as the Freudian psychologists have taught. He also pointed out that increasing sexual license leads to decreasing creativity and productivity in the intellectual, artistic, and economic spheres of life. [Frances] Schaeffer adds: . . . 'man has separated his sexual life from its original high purpose as a vehicle of communication of person to person. Sexuality loses its personal dimension; men and women treat each other as things to be exploited'.

The Consequences of the Fall and the Depravity of Man According to the Letter to the Romans, Andrew S. Kulikovsky, August 25, 1999.

Seen in this light, God's wrath is a reluctant but forced divine withdrawal.

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Heb. 3:11-12. These verses clearly equate God's "wrath" with men "departing from the living God" and not being able to "enter into [God's] rest." Wrath resides where God's presence is not. God's presence progressively withdraws as it is continually rejected, neglected or unselected. God's forced withdrawal leaves a spiritual vacuum Satan rushes to fill with his destructions. It is interesting to note that Jesus spoke of ultimate separation from God as a kind of "holy deportation" from God's presence. Jesus will tell those who never "knew" Him to, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7:23. Jesus again refers to the unprofitable servant being "cast . . . into outer darkness." Matt. 25:30. In other words, the ultimate result of God's wrath

(negative sowing and reaping) is complete separation and alienation from the person of God. The absence of God is self-generated darkness. The protective presence of God is "pressured away" by the sinner's hardened heart. This "holy recoil" of God's protective presence results in the sinner getting their way. They become their sinful choices. They reap the full harvest of their evil sowing. They create and progressively inhabit their own Hell. They make their own bed in which they are now allowed to fully lie. Satan now has full access to destroy their lives with the curses of Dt. 28.

Remember, God can't save us from ourselves without our consent, invitation and cooperation. God's only part in this process is the mandatory withdrawal of His protective presence when the sinner's heart hardens past a certain point. Were God not to withdraw when the human heart hardens without repentance, then God would violate His own law of freewill and sowing and reaping. In other words, if God continues to fully protect sinners regardless of their continual evil sowing, then God is robbing them of their consequence of their choice. Choice without consequence is not a true choice. God shows us as much mercy as possible without violating our freewill. **But if we don't utilize our space to repent, then our self-created wrath will be progressively harvested.**

- C. **God's wrath is the law of negative sowing and reaping.** Just as gravity is a law of God which permeates the physical universe, God's wrath (negative sowing and reaping) is a law of God which permeates the spiritual universe. These laws are self-executing and are triggered automatically in response to certain behaviors.

In the physical, if I walk off a rooftop, the law of gravity automatically self-executes its power upon me and I am driven to the ground. In the spiritual, if I commit sin (faithless living), then the law of sowing and reaping automatically self-executes its power upon me by diminishing God's protective presence which then enables demonic pressure closer access to oppress me with the curses of Dt. 28.

These processes are automatic. God does not decide on an ongoing basis which apple will fall to the ground each and every moment of each and every day. Similarly, God does not decide on an ongoing basis how He is going to specifically punish every sin committed each and every moment of each and every day. Such consequences are automatic in this moral universe just like gravity is automatic in this physical universe.

God permeated the physical universe with the self-executing law of gravity.

Man can use the law of gravity to his benefit when, for example, he safely lands a plane, shakes an apple out of a tree, hand-glides, parachutes safely down to the earth, etc. However, man can also misuse the law of gravity when, for example, he walks off a roof, makes too daring a leap, climbs a mountain without safety equipment, etc.

In the spiritual, man can use the law of sowing and reaping to his benefit, when, for example, he sows seeds of faith, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness and temperance. (Gal. 5:22-23). His reaping here will be ever-increasing intimacy and knowledge of God. However, man can also misuse the law of sowing and reaping when he, for example, sows seeds of unbelief, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, wrath, strife and lasciviousness. (Gal. 5:19-21). Man's reaping here will produce ever increasing separation from God's protective presence.

As God's protective presence is pushed away by our sinful sowing, demons move in like maggots on a rotting corpse to inflict pain, sickness, suffering, depression, deception, fear, torment, failure and ultimately death. Short of death, God's protective presence can re-establish itself to offer greater levels of protection and heal all wounds caused by the enemy. Sometimes, even after death God's presence can invade and drive out the enemy and resurrect man's spirit, soul and body.

Also consider that our sinful sowing can potentially harm others. Jesus said,

And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. Jn. 4:37.

Secondhand sowing is likened to a man who misuses the law of gravity. If that man walks off a roof when somebody is walking by on the street underneath him, then his misuse of gravity (walking off the roof) will produce secondhand harm when he lands on the innocent victim below. Likewise, when any man or group of men (family, club, association, city, state, nation) sows sin, then many innocent victims will be impacted unless the victims themselves are girded up fully in the protective promises of God. Any man walking in Psalm 91 protection (a/k/a "Job's hedge" and "the full armour of God") will not be subject to secondhand sowing. In these cases, God's protective presence will not allow the righteous to be harmed. But to walk in this protection, the man must confess, believe and act upon the spirit-revealed word of God each and every day of his life. (Jsh. 1:8; Lk. 10:19).

D. **God will never violate our freewill.** He seeks to influence it, attract it, inform it, strengthen it and gradually join with it as we voluntarily hear and invite Jesus into every situation of our lives. But, God will not violate our will by raping it with His will. Rev. 3:20. God had the power to prevent Adam and Eve's evil choice, Cain's evil choice and Pharaoh's evil choices, yet He never violated their freewills. God's limits are all self-imposed limits. He will never violate the freewill of man. Even though God has the power to violate freewill, He will not because He has given His word that men have the dominion to freely choose to co-create their destiny in this earth. If God violates man's freewill, then man is spiritually aborted and can never become a true son. God created the world to develop sons who freely and progressively choose to walk in faith, love, spirit and obedience.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Dt. 30:19-20.

Yet, the law of freewill means that there is a door of God-rejection which man can freely choose in any situation. Behind this door is the wrath that comes from a life alienated from God's presence. Deuteronomy 28 describes the fruit of this existence: worry, fear, oppression, depression, poverty, lack, sickness, strife, failed relationships, failed parenting, failed marriages, failed work and failed ministry. It is not that God created the wrath, but He did create the opportunity for it to be chosen and co-created by the freewill of men and angels.

The Greek scholar William Barclay taught that to better understand what a given word means, look at the other words that usually accompany it. Consider this group of words that frequently appear together in the New Testament: **wrath, law, death, sin, curse, condemnation, fear, bondage and Satan.** These words all reflect the misuse of the freewill God gave man. Man's immoral exercise of freewill enthrones Satan and empowers these terms as the governing dynamics of wrath.

Because the **law** worketh **wrath** Rom. 4:15.

The sting of **death** is **sin**; and the strength of **sin** is the **law**. 1 Cor.15:56.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through **death** he might destroy him that had the power of **death**, that is, the **devil**; And deliver them who through **fear** of **death** were all their

lifetime subject to **bondage**. Heb. 12:14-15.

But that no man is justified by the **law** in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the **law is not of faith**: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the **curse of the law**, being made a **curse** for us: for it is written, **Cursed** is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal. 3:11-14.

There is therefore now no **condemnation** to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the **law of sin and death**. Rom. 8:1-2.

God created a moral universe with a moral law underpinning it - - the law of sowing and reaping.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Gal. 6:7-8.

The "wrath of God" is really the law of negative sowing and reaping. God created a universe where evil will not ultimately prosper. God created a universe where good will ultimately prosper. The wrath of God (negative sowing and reaping) is revealed against all unrighteousness and unbelief (Rom. 1:18).

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? **But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds**: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. Rom. 2:4-11.

The above passage clearly says that each man reaps what he sows and that God's wrath (the law of negative sowing and reaping), "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). Thus, it is man and Satan who co-create the wrath we face now and the wrath to come at judgment day. The use of the term the "wrath of God" is no different than calling the law of gravity "the gravity of God." God ordained gravity, but God did not ordain our misuse of the law of gravity. Suppose a man is warned by his teacher to avoid the misuse of gravity and not to jump from great heights. The man

ignores the teacher's advice, jumps off a roof and breaks his leg. It is accurate to say that but for "the gravity of God," the man would not have been injured. God did permeate the physical world with this law. It is his creation and he ordained that at the beginning it should be so. Yet, it is unfair to say God is morally responsible for the broken leg. The man freely chose to walk off a roof and disregard the natural law of God. God created the law of freewill just as He created the laws of gravity and sowing and reaping.

Even though Satan, in a sense, executes the curses of the wrath from Deuteronomy 28, it is wrong to call it the wrath "of Satan." Satan did not create freewill sowing and reaping. God did. To call it the wrath "of Satan" is to give Satan too much power. God is the author of all creation, including the laws of gravity and sowing and reaping. Wrath comes on us from Satan as a result of our misuse of God's governing dynamics. Satan may be the executor of the curses of wrath, but man's moral misuse of God's spiritual laws is the true cause. This cause comes from a moral God creating a moral universe with moral laws of cause and effect. We choose to co-create wrath with Satan rather than choose to co-create blessing with God. God's only relation to wrath is in creating man with an ability to create wrath in a free universe where morality demands consequences for sin.

It is the wrath "of God" only in the sense that the law of sowing and reaping is "of God." In terms of what evil is actually sown, that is the freewill choice of man combined with the freewill temptations of Satan. What is eventually reaped is not the actual construct of God, but rather is the actual construct of what man and Satan have co-created (i.e. sown) with their freewills.

God will never send anybody to hell. If man goes to hell, he goes by his own free choice. Hell was created for the devil and his angels, not for man. God never meant that man should go there.

William Franklin (Billy) Graham, p. 166, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

The love of God, with arms extended on a cross, bars the way to hell. But if that love is ignored, rejected, and finally refused, there comes a time when love can only weep while man pushes past into the self-chosen alienation which Christ went to the cross to avert.

Michael Green, p. 166, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

Men are not in hell because God is angry with them; they are in wrath and darkness because they have done to the light, which infinitely flows forth from God, as that man does to the light of the sun who puts out his own eyes.

William Law, pp 166-167, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

The wrath of God is simply the rule of the universe that a man will reap what he sows, and that no one ever escapes the consequences of his sin. The wrath of God and the moral order of the universe are one and the same thing.

William Barclay, pp 126-127, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

Thus, we make our own hell; we create our own destiny; we reap the wrath we have stored up by our evil sowing. As George MacDonald said, "The one principle of hell is 'I am my own.'" **God's only role at this point is in withdrawing His protective presence and allowing our evil harvest to now be partially reaped (or at judgment day to be fully reaped).**

Let's look at a couple of examples. First, consider these verses:

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Heb. 3:7-12.

These verses establish that when men "tempted" (literally "pressured away") the Lord through continual unbelief, then God's wrath in withdrawing His protective presence kept these men from entering into God's rest. The ultimate responsibility for this failure was assigned to the men because of their hard heart of unbelief, "in departing from the living God." Thus, again we see that God's wrath is the reluctant but forced withdrawal of His presence in response to men who first harden their own hearts in departing from the living God. In other words, men's hardened hearts "grieve" and "quench" away the Holy Spirit's protective presence. (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19). Consider these verses in further explanation:

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1 Cor. 10:9-10.

I have heard these verses cited for the proposition that we better not tempt Jesus or He will send snakes to kill us. Wrong! According to interlinear translations, these verses literally warn us, "not to pressure out the Christ, just as some of them (the Israelites) pressured and by the snakes were destroyed." The picture becomes clearer and clearer. Man pushes God's protective presence away by his sin, grumbling and unbelief. Demonic forces (snakes) move in the vacuum created and afflict man with all forms of satanic oppression. **Wrath then is man-generated, man-perpetuated, God-evacuated and Satan-dominated.**

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. **Is. 54:8-10.** These verses confirm God's wrath is God's face turning away from a situation, not toward it. God also promises in these verses that He is not the source of wrath, but only kindness, peace and mercy.

This process is exactly analogous to our law of gravity example. The "gravity of God" demands that a man who walks off the roof will fall and be struck in proportion to the height he fell. The "sowing and reaping (wrath) of God" demands that a man progressively and ultimately harvests the evil in exact ratio to the sins sown. The only law "of God" which seeks to delay, hamper and prevent our evil harvests from being fully reaped in our lives is the law of mercy (Jas. 2:13). This is where God's active presence is right now. He seeks to protect our freewill by ministering love and hope to our hearts. He delays the harvests of our past sowing by giving us space to repent. When we do repent, God works His divine power through the blood of Jesus to wash away our prior evil sowing so that we will not harvest destruction in our life (1 Jn. 1:7; Gal. 3:13-14). Now we are set free to sow to the spirit and reap new and bountiful life every day.

- E. **It is important to distinguish two types of negative sowing and reaping.** Before I was saved, I was a whoremonger addicted to lust, alcohol and pornography. I was sowing sexual sin after sexual sin, but God gave me incredible space to repent before I reaped the oncoming harvest of divorce, sickness, depravity and hardness of heart. Yet, in all this sowing, I was never near anyone who was walking in Psalm 91 protection (a/k/a "Job's hedge" and "the full armour of God"). Only after I was saved and baptized in the Holy Ghost did I start to fellowship with people who walked in divine protection. I began to observe that such people could not be harmed by the

attacks of men or devils. In fact, when these people were attacked one way by the enemy, the enemy would soon flee before them seven ways (Dt. 28:7).

In all of this, I saw two kinds of negative sowing and reaping. The first was the general sowing of sin which produces a gradual harvest of a ruined life. However, the second kind of negative sowing and reaping is even more lethal. This occurs when we attack, by word or action, someone or something under the divine protection of the Holy Ghost. This is why Jesus considered blasphemy of the Holy Ghost the most serious sin. (Mk. 3:22-30). This is why we are warned not to "grieve" or "quench" the Holy Spirit in any way. (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). This is why we are warned not to pray for someone who has committed the sin unto death - - blaspheming the Holy Spirit. (1 Jn. 5:16).

Attacking someone or something which is girded up with divine protection is akin to: playing chicken with a brick wall while driving a car at 120 MPH; shooting a bulletproof shield at point blank range ensuring that the ricochet will deflect directly back at the shooter; hiking head-first into a low-lying tree branch; absent-mindedly strolling and falling into an open manhole. In all these scenarios, the cause of the wrath reaped is not the action of the brick wall, bulletproof shield, tree branch or manhole. No, the cause of the wrath reaped was the arrogance of the driver, the foolhardiness of the shooter, the inattentiveness of the hiker and the carelessness of the pedestrian. Their own attitudes, disrespect and misuse of their environment caused them to suffer a wrath of their own making.

So it is also when the protective spirit of the Lord is arrogantly, foolishly or carelessly attacked. It is not God's wrathful fist being swung at us. No, it is us suffering the wrath of our own making by running into His rock-hard fist which is firmly and protectively clenched around the righteous. It is our momentum and actions which reap the wrath, not God's momentum or actions. God will not retreat from the Psalm 91 line of righteous protection. If we foolishly cross the Psalm 91 line against the Holy Spirit, we will suffer a collision, possibly a fatal collision.

Consider the following examples:

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). This couple lied to the Holy Spirit in the midst of a fellowship in full Psalm 91 protection. Peter asked Sapphira in the literal Greek of verse 9, Why did the two of you agree "to pressure the Spirit of Master?" (Word Study Greek-English New Testament, Paul R.

McReynolds, Tyndall, pp. 441 (1999)). In other words, why did you two “push away” the protective presence of God? This fellowship was so close to God’s holy presence, that the sin of lying to the Holy Spirit was just like shooting a bullet of sin point blank into a bulletproof shield of holiness. The direct ricochet killed both Ananias and Sapphira. Satan had tempted them both to sin against the Spirit (5:3). They conceived the sin with Satan. They sowed the sin with their lips and actions. God’s Spirit recoiled at their sin, leaving them unprotected and vulnerable to reap the wrath of immediate destruction of the flesh by Satan. They crossed the Psalm 91 line with fatal results of their own making.

Herod (Acts 12:1-25). Some believe that this passage says that the angel of the Lord killed Herod, the political king of the Jews, in cold blood. In reality however, this episode is perhaps the clearest example of what it means to run into the Psalm 91 brick wall of divine protection at breakneck speed. The first verse in the chapter is the key:

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Acts 12:1-4.

Bad idea. Bad sowing. Even worse reaping to come. As if this weren’t enough, Herod allowed himself to be worshiped as a God by pagans. (Acts 12:20-23). Herod was a runaway train that smashed headlong into the Rock of Ages. Sowing evil against the body of Christ reaped Herod an encounter with the angel of the Lord. The scripture doesn’t say that the angel actually killed Herod, only that the angel “smote” Herod. The angel also “smote” Peter in verse seven of the same chapter in order to wake him up. The Greek word for “smote” can mean to “knock or tap in order to get someone’s attention.” Thus, its entirely possible that the angel knocked on Herod’s soul to get his attention by showing Herod the gravity of his sins in the Lord’s eyes. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Herod, after the angel smote him, “He fell into the deepest sorrow; a severe pain also arose in his bowels, and he died after five days of illness” (Josephus, book 19, ch. 8,2). Acts 12:23 says that after the angel smote Herod, “he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost.” This Greek word for “worms” is only used one other place in the New Testament, Mark 9:44-48, where it’s used to describe non-stop hellish torment. This torment eventually resulted in Herod “giving up the ghost,” a term used elsewhere only in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, two other unfortunates who beheld the gravity of their sin to the

extent that they surrendered their souls to death. This unique expression, "giving up the ghost," describes the dead end of despair that awaits those who cross the line and sow against the white hot anointing of God. For such unfortunate men, when they see the full gravity of their sin, they essentially surrender their lives in despair and worm-infested torment. The only role of an angel in this process is to smite these sinners into self-awareness by splashing the water of conviction in their horrified faces. These sinners' self-destructive shame take them the rest of the suicidal way. Remember, God doesn't operate in death. Satan operates in death. (Jn. 10:10; Heb. 2:14). God only operates in life. Death floods in to fill the vacuum of God's absence after He withdraws His protective presence.

Zacharias and Elymas (Lk. 1:5-65; Acts 13:6-13). Both men crossed the Psalm 91 line with less fatal results than Ananias, Sapphira and Herod. Zacharias, John the Baptist's father, started to spew words of unbelief at the angel Gabriel about the impossibility of John's birth and prophetic calling. (1:19-20). God's divine protection was completely surrounding this whole event and words of unbelief could not penetrate the hedge and pollute the atmosphere. Zacharias crossed the Psalm 91 line and reaped the temporary loss of his vocal cords. He ran head-long into a brick wall and suffered temporary vocal damage. Likewise, when Elymas the Sorcerer dared to try to turn one of Paul's converts away from the faith, he ran into a Psalm 91 brick wall and suffered temporary eye damage. (13:8-11). Elymas had sown much evil previously, but in this case crossing the Psalm 91 line caused immediate results of his self-made wrath. It was God's mercy that the blindness was just for a season.

When we confess, believe and act on the spirit-revealed word of God, we are fully girded for war. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD. Is. 54:17. Whatever man or devil attacks us risks complete annihilation, not at our hand but at their own. Like the mythological snake that eats its own tail until its whole body disappears, so does evil consume itself into oblivion.

Like Jesus and Stephen, we must pray that other men's sins against us not be held against them. (Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60). But, when the enemies of God attack a person, group or event under the protective presence of the Holy Spirit, then such a foolhardy attack will bring its own destructive wrath back upon the enemies' heads. Consider well the famous advice of Gamaliel when he advised the council of Pharisees to leave the apostles alone: And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest

haply ye be found even to fight against God. Acts. 5:38-39.

[Warning: beware of using verses in the book of Revelation in a strict literal sense. This book is what theologians call "Apocalyptic." The language is highly figurative and symbolic. For instance, when Jesus says He will "kill" the children of Jezebel, He obviously is not referring to literal children (Rev. 2:23). Jesus says that children are to be allowed to come to Him for blessing. (Matt. 19:13-15). Jesus never says that children are to come to Him so He can kill them. No, these verses in Revelation are not referring to literal children, but to figurative children. The children of Jezebel are the offspring of the union between the Jezebel spirit and the servants of God she has seduced into committing spiritual adultery, which is idolatry. (Rev. 2:20). These are the children (offspring) of Jezebel: sinful idolatry, fleshly works and false worship. Jezebel's children are the works of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal. 5:19-21. Jesus' rebuke to Thyatira was to not allow the Jezebel spirit, which works through the flesh of false prophets (Rev. 2:20), to seduce true servants of God into false ministry. If they failed to purge out this evil, then the spiritual fruit (children) that flowed from the idolatry would be destroyed by the Psalm 91 line which God draws to protect His true churches. In other words, their false ministries would be destroyed. God does and will continue to destroy Jezebels' offspring when they come against the Psalm 91 protection God gives His true body.]

F. The view that all men are just "sinners in the hands of an angry God" is spiritual poison we must not drink.

The God that holds you over a pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath toward 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 to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment . . . O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in.

Jonathan Edwards, July 8, 1741.

Edwards said many wonderful things, but this sermon excerpt was not one of them. Such a view cripples our faith because it misrepresents the character of God. Oswald Chambers said, "The origin of all sin is found in

the mistrust of God's character." The Lord has repeatedly stressed to me that the following passage is key to understanding how the character of God has been largely misrepresented over thousands of years.

Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. Nu. 20:1-12.

Moses' sin of striking the rock is simply this - - it misrepresented the character of God. God told Moses to speak to the rock so that the people could see the love God had for them in miraculously producing water from a dry, hard place. Rather than minister this love of God to the people, Moses ministered wrath to the people making it appear that God was "angry" with them. Moses projected his own wrath onto God's word. The result - - the false appearance of an angry God thoroughly disgusted with the people. The sin - - Moses misrepresented the power of God as coming from a spirit of coercion rather than a spirit of invitation. God wanted to lovingly draw the people to Him, not scare and condemn them away. So serious was this sin that it disqualified Moses from entering the promised land.

I believe that this sin of "striking the rock" was not just one occurrence in Moses' life. Much of what Moses wrote in the law (Genesis - Deuteronomy) reflects true words from God that are tainted by a spirit of wrath Moses struggled with during his life. Moses was a righteous man faithful in all his house, but he lacked the indwelling righteousness of Jesus needed to fulfill the law. What God sent in love, Moses conveyed in wrath. What God sent to bless, Moses used to condemn. What God sent to transform man, Moses misused to deform man. That Moses had an anger problem is well-proven

both by the above passage as well as his killing of an Egyptian (Nu. 20: 1-2; Ex. 2:11-14).

It is not that God did not speak through Moses, for He certainly did. But what Moses ministered was often twisted or tainted with the result that God's character of love was not fully or accurately revealed. Nonetheless, God did not desert His people even though they mischaracterized His heart. For instance, the rock did miraculously spout water to save the people. God didn't withdraw the miracle because of Moses' misrepresentation of His character. The Israelites saw a pure version of God's power from Moses law, but they did not see a pure version of God's heart. They all projected their own fear, anger and wrath onto their image of God. The result was a perverted and misleading picture of God. Nonetheless, God used these misrepresentations of His character to achieve His goals. Consider these quotes from scholar Walter Wink:

The violence of the Old Testament has always been a scandal of Christianity. The church has usually ducked the issue, either by allegorizing the Old Testament or by rejecting it. Biblical scholar Raymund Schwager points out that there are six hundred passages of explicit violence in the Hebrew bible, one thousand verses where God's own violent actions of punishment are described, a hundred passages where Yahweh expressly commands others to kill people, and several stories where God irrationally kills or tries to kill for no apparent reason (for example, Ex. 4:24-26.). Violence, Schwager concludes, is easily the most often mentioned activity in the Hebrew Bible. . . . In the Hebrew Bible, God's alleged punishments are usually carried out by human beings attacking each other. This indicates, says Schwager, that the actual initiative for killing does not originate with God, but is projected onto God by those who desire revenge. . . .

The God whom Jesus reveals refrains from all forms of reprisal. God does not endorse holy wars or just wars. God does not sanction religions of violence. . . . To be true God's offspring requires the unconditional renunciation of violence. The reign of God means the elimination of every form of violence between individuals and nations. This is a realm and a possibility of which those imprisoned by their trust in violence cannot even conceive. . . .

The violence of the Bible is the necessary precondition for the gradual perception of the meaning of violence. . . . The violence of Scripture, so embarrassing to us today, became the means by which sacred violence was revealed for what it is: a lie perpetrated against the victims in the name of God. God was working through violence to expose violence for what it is and to reveal the divine nature as nonviolent.

The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium, by Walter Wink (New York: Galilee Doubleday, 1998), 84-86, 89.

It is not that the Israelites never experienced the love of God, for they frequently did. It is not that they never experienced God's glory, for they occasionally did. It is not they never entered into true praise of God, for they

certainly did from time to time. But, they never entered into the abiding goodness and continual nearness of God as Abba-Father. For them, God was a temperamental king full of both lovingkindness and explosive wrath. On the one hand He would bless them for obedience, but on the other cruel hand He would send famine, sickness, disaster, death and destruction on them (and their children) whenever they disobeyed Him. (Lev. 26:14-17, 21-22; Dt. 28:15-68). The end result was that Israel was exiled from their promised land and perpetual victims to repeated oppressions from Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. They also lost the ark of the covenant, which represented the protective presence of the Lord being withdrawn from them. Their image of a wrathful God did not sustain them in their times of need. They suffered from a roller-coaster spirituality where God was a Jekyll and Hyde schizophrenic who might love them today but kill them tomorrow. No wonder they couldn't abide in the presence of God. No wonder Moses could only see God's goodness from behind at an angled distance (Nu. 33:13-23). Hallelujah, Jesus came to eliminate the roller-coaster ride by showing that God is good all the time and in Him is no darkness or cruelty at all. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Lk. 3:5-6.

Jesus came to fulfill the law by revealing the Father's heart of pure love and goodwill toward men. Jesus came to show that God's power is invitational, not coercive. Jesus came to show us what wrong spirit we are of and what right spirit we should be of:

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he [Jesus] should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. **And they did not receive him**, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples **James** and **John** saw this, they said, **Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?** But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, **Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.** And they went to another village. Lu. 9:51-56.

James and John struck the rock. They projected their wrath upon Jesus in the hopes of calling down fire upon those they resented. This is the exact same sin which kept Moses from the promised land. We can also project other negative emotions and attitudes upon our image of God: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, malice and evil speaking. When we do this, we call down fire, strike the rock and misrepresent our God to ourselves and each other.

Beloved, we must cease all wrong projection of our negative emotions onto our image of God. We must sanctify our view of God by knowing and growing His goodness into the very fabric of our being. When we stop projecting our evil onto God, then we will see Him as He is and we will be transformed into the same image glory to glory. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor. 3:18.

This is the conclusion of the matter when it comes to the goodness of God: **knowing the absolute goodness of God allows us to faithfully and accurately imitate His true character.** If we have a schizophrenic image of God, then rest assured we ourselves will also be spiritually schizophrenic. This schizophrenic double-mindedness makes us unstable in all our ways and prevents us from receiving anything from the Lord.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Jas. 1:6-8.

Such a wrong image of God will cause us to call fire down on those we hate, strike the rock of condemnation against those to whom we minister, and finally, and most tragically, deceive ourselves into believing mean and unworthy things about our beloved Heavenly Father. If we are to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21), and only God is good (Matt. 19:17), then we must overcome all evil with the goodness of God. To do this, we must put away all wrath from our minds and hearts.

Neither give place to the devil. . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor. Eph. 4:27,29-32; 5:1-2.

If I hate or despise any one man in the world, I hate something which God cannot hate, and despise that which he loves.

William Law, pp 160-161, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

Many people hate this teaching because they believe it blasphemes their wrathful image of an angry God. Isn't it amazing that people get furious at the prospect that God doesn't kill His children, doesn't put sickness on them and doesn't destroy them. Unbelievably, this very notion sends many Christians into a rage. God's wrath, as described in this outline, is not like man's wrath. We must not project our wrath onto God and then claim it is His wrath. The wrath of God is merely the law of negative sowing and reaping which man self-activates, self-imposes, and self-executes. God has no malice toward sinners, just sin. Sin self-generates wrath. Wrath is not found in the presence of God, but in the absence of God. The only thing found in the presence of God is love. This is a concept not too good to be true.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. 1 Jn. 4:7-21.

To say that God is love is to say that God is the living, active, dynamic, ceaselessly desiring reality who will not let go until he has won the free response of his creation.

Norman Pittenger, p 137, The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

XVI. **Blessed Question Number Fifteen: What is the fear of the Lord?**

- A. The fear of the Lord of which the Bible so often speaks is our awestruck response to the presence of God. When I first read in the Bible about the fear of the Lord many years ago, I assumed it meant literal fright. I could never understand how being terrified of God could bring me closer to God. As I began to study the nuances of the Hebrew language, I saw that the

"fear of the Lord" meant something different than being scared of God. "Fear of the Lord" is more accurately described as the "awe of the Lord." The awe of God is a beautiful thing. It carries with it the ideas of jaw-dropping amazement, passionate reverence and anxious wonderment. There is an element of fear, but it is not based on the type of terror a battered child feels toward a brutal father who regularly abuses him.

The ancient rabbis distinguished between what they called "higher fear" (awe) and "lower fear" (terror). Godly fear is motivated by the matchless presence, power and goodness of God. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." Ps. 19:9. This produces spiritual butterflies in the belly of every lover of God. Just as new brides experience jitters of nervous desire on their wedding nights, so do God-lovers tremble with anxious passion as they seek to grow in intimacy with God. Our honeymoon thrill is never over with God as we seek to always relate to Him in the newlywed way of "first love." Rev. 2:4. Yet, unbelievers don't experience the "higher fear" of awe, but the "lower fear" of terror at the prospect of eternal separation from the only good God. But this "lower fear" is not the fear of the Lord the Bible teaches. Rather, it is the fear of Godlessness, of a life and destiny which has chosen not to know and love God. It is fear at the self-generated wrath which is being stored up by and for the unbeliever. This fear is real, but it is not the "fear of the Lord" we are to walk in. The fear of the Lord we are to walk in is one part awe, one part love, one part zeal, one part soberness and one part humility.

- B. This is the key. The fear of the Lord is our response to knowing God's glorious presence. Hebrew "knowing" means "relationally experiencing." Not mind knowledge, but heart knowledge. Wholehearted interaction with another. Intimate and mutual participation in each other's presence. Only through this kind of fervent engagement can we truly "know" God in the Hebrew way.
- C. The importance of the fear of the Lord cannot be understated. It is the womb of our heart which nourishes, develops and births true faith. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence " Prov. 14:26. It is the fertilizer of fervency which makes our heart soil rich so that we may reap God's hundredfold harvest in our lives. It is what stimulates and develops our spiritual sense to discern the Lord's presence ever more clearly. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Ps. 25:14. The fear of the Lord is our wholehearted accommodation to God's Spirit. This heart attitude is how we make ourselves available to God. The fear of the Lord renders our heart a "hospitality house" which continually

welcomes and serves the Holy Spirit.

- D. The cycle of lifestyle fear of the Lord works like this: God touches us with His presence; we respond in awe and stand at continual alert to receive more of the Lord; God then interacts with us more deeply according to our increased readiness; we again respond in awe and further sanctify our hearts to receive even more from God; God then penetrates us more intimately; we again respond with stronger consecrated awe; God again counters with an increased touch; God's righteous action; our righteous reaction; God gives us all His presence we can handle; we rejoice in it and prepare our hearts for greater encounters.
- E. The fear of the Lord is one part joyful response to the Lord's prior touches, one part ongoing response to the Lord's continuing current touch, and one part expectation which keeps our spirit, soul and body at constant spiritual alert for the Lord's future touches. This fluid process is like a wonderful dance where God passionately leads as we passionately follow. It always takes two to tango. "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged." Is. 60:5. We all must learn to join the dance!
- F. The fear of the Lord is our righteous response to God's loving presence. It is a state of responsiveness where our entire being is set at awed readiness to continually relate to the ongoing presence of God. Just as our military is on constant alert and on a continuous state of readiness, so must the army of God stand fast in the fear of the Lord - - ever zealous, ever vigilant, ever responsive and ever amazed.
- G. This eye-of-the-tiger attitude drives us to position ourselves to relate and respond to the Lord every glorious second of every glorious day: "be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Prov. 23:17. This is a life journey. Each day closer to God. Each day more sensitive to His Spirit. Each day more passionate for God. The Jews have a name for God, "Ein Sof," which means "without end." This emphasizes God as our lifelong of process of growing in His knowledge. The fear of the Lord is our wholehearted esteem for this continuing relationship with God. It is moving God from the back-burner of our hearts to the front-burner. It is truly putting God first in our lives.
- H. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezek. 36:26. It is impossible to fear the Lord without first knowing and experiencing Him on a heart level. Those who are awestruck with God

must first be heart struck by God. It is a personal revelation of God's love for you alone. He will come to you in your own emotional language and sing His ballad to the very depths of your soul. Your heart will burn within you as His love fills your memories, heals your hurts, and shows you He has always had His enthusiastic eye on your life. You will be astonished at how tender He is towards you, and yet at the same time so eager to give you your full inheritance in the kingdom of God.

- I. The true Hebrew knowledge of God produces lifestyle fear of the Lord. To know the Lord in the Hebrew way allows you to respond in awe in the Hebrew way. To know God intimately is to be awestruck. To be awestruck is to overflow with esteem, admiration, wonder, amazement, veneration and worship. This is by no means a one time experience. Your life is one continuous concert before the Lord and love of your life. "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore." Ps. 86:11-12.
- J. If many church-goers were forthright, they would have to admit the awe of the Lord is not to be found in any man-made church which prioritizes the traditions of man over the presence of God:

"He [Jesus] answered and said unto them [the religious leaders], Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . . Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." Mk. 7:6-7, 13.
- K. As mind-based organization and man-based elevation increase, awe of God decreases, and decreases, and decreases. The result is a people who take God for granted. They don't wait for His presence in radical amazement and expectation. In short, they have lost what Abraham Heschel (1907-1972) called, "the legacy of wonder." Heschel rightly believed that, "Indifference to the sublime wonder of living is the root of sin." Jesus spews this lukewarm mind-set out of His mouth because it does not fear the Lord. (Rev. 3:16). Heschel wrote that fear of the Lord is a "form of thinking" that never ceases "joyous appreciation" and "reverent wonder" of God.
- L. God wants the fear of the Lord re-established in His people. This can only happen if man's religion is cast down and the Holy Spirit is lifted up. If His prioritized presence fills our meetings, relationships and homes, then we will

discover the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Then our heart palpitations for God will increase as God enters the building not made with human hands, but "which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10. The building God seeks to inhabit is you: "Ye are God's building." 1 Cor. 3:9.

- M. No country has more groups of fans than the United States. In sports, masses of loyal devotees literally worship football, baseball, racing, basketball, hockey and soccer. Individual sports stars walk the earth as gods in the eyes of these fans. Add to the mix entertainment fans who revere rock stars, movie stars, theater stars, and even professional wrestling stars. All these showcase the true driving force of fame in this society - - the fan. The dictionary defines a "fan" as one who is ardently, fervently, intensely, passionately, glowingly and/or zealously devoted to a person or thing. A fan by definition must have a heart burning with focus on its object of devotion. May our hero-worship of Jesus ignite and propel us to fanatic loyalty and well-guided zeal for the Kingdom of God.
- N. There is a Hebrew term "meshugga la davar" which means "crazy about one thing." We must be "meshugga la davar" about God. Crazy for Him, hanging onto His every word and gesture, obsessed with Him and possessed by Him. God has always been meshugga la davar about you. He is your biggest fan. He knows everything about you - - your favorite color, song, movie, book, and dessert. He carries your picture with Him at all times. The reason we are able to be meshugga la davar about God is that He was first meshugga la davar about us. 1 Jn. 4:19.
- O. But how do we get from here to there? How do we get and grow in the fear of the Lord? The answer is that we must become true fans of God, fans who love Him with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. One need only to compare the genuine enthusiasm sports and entertainment fans display in their public gatherings to know that the man-made churches are not fan clubs according to the dictionary definition. Look in the eyes of the youth, the men and the women - - - see the boredom, dullness, apathy and sense of rut. They lack meshugga la davar - - focus, fire and frenzy. Wise men of old taught that everything is in God's hand except devotion to God. Devotion to God is our portion, our calling and our spiritual service. To be a fervent fan sitting at the feet of Jesus is what the Lord referred to when He said, "one thing is needful" Lk. 10:42. The Christian writer and lover of God, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), said it this way: "Purity of heart is to will one thing."

- P. By way of review, the fear of the Lord is a passionately responsive heart that eagerly seeks, expects, esteems and accommodates the Holy Spirit. It is amazement at God, passion for God and high romance with God. The fear of the Lord can only be obtained as our righteous response to God genuinely touching our hearts. It is at the same time our past pleasure in God, our current connection to Him, and our future expectancy from Him. In short, the fear of the Lord is our heart attitude which sets our whole being at vigilant attention to respond to the Holy Spirit's ongoing presence. "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Deut. 4:29.

XVII. Blessed Question Number Sixteen: In what way are we "predestined" for good or evil?

- A. "God predestines every man to be saved. The devil predestines every man to be damned. Man has the casting vote." Anonymous.

The above quote is the bottom line answer to the question of predestination. Just as God has a predestined plan of good for all men when they believe in Jesus, Satan has a predestined plan of evil for all men when they choose not to believe in Jesus. (Acts 26:16-18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Lk. 22:31-32; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:8; 5:19). Remember, when it comes to the freewill of man, God's loving power is always invitational and never coercive. (Rev. 3:20). Concerning this invitational power of love, consider the following points:

1. God desires all men to be saved. (Ez. 18:23, 32; 33:11; Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2).
2. God's love is universal and impartial. (Acts 10:34; Dt. 10:17-19; 2 Chr. 19:7; Job 34:19; Is. 55:4-5; Ez. 18:25; Mk. 12:14; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 2:10-11; Eph. 6:9; 1 Pet. 1:17).
3. God never willingly afflicts or grieves anyone. (Lam. 3:33; Dt. 32:4; Hab. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5).

The above verses were topically adapted from Gregory A. Boyd, Satan and the Problem of Evil, p. 360.

God invites us to receive our blessed pre-destiny He has pre-planned and prepared for us. As we receive in faith our calling and commission, we bring Heaven's will to earth. Yet, all men are free to

reject the calling and commission of God. To reject God's pre-destiny of good for our lives is to accept Satan's pre-destiny of evil for our lives. The Lord recently showed me that this process is similar to what is known in the book publishing business as an "adventure book." In an adventure book, at the end of each page and chapter, the reader must assume the place of the main character and choose from several options which course of action he will take. Depending on the choice, he will then be directed to a different page and chapter than the other options. For each reader, a different course of adventure will be experienced based on their respective choices after each page and chapter. Some chapters all readers must pass through, but others are optional and conditional. I believe this is the concept that best fits our model of freewill. Some pages and chapters in the Bible all men must go through: the cross, repentance, the blood of Jesus, the second coming, etc. These have been pre-ordained by God and are set in stone. Other pages and chapters are optional based on the sowing and reaping we undertake. God knows what all our options will be, but the choice is ours whether to accept God's proposed option by faith or reject it by unbelief.

Actually, in any given situation, God always presents faith options and Satan always presents sin options, one of which is not to choose. Thus, if we choose God - - we win. If we choose Satan - - we lose. But if we don't choose, we lose as well. Unselected faith options equal selected unbelief options. As we sow to the spirit, we avoid the pages and chapters of evil circumstances largely authored by Satan and experience instead high adventure in pages or chapters of good report written entirely by God. But, even when we sow to the flesh as we choose the way of an evil chapter, God always provides an option of escape in the circumstance. (1 Cor. 10:13). Our choices, seen in this light, determine which pre-destiny we choose - - God's or Satan's.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Dt. 30:19-20.

- B. Some Christians, usually called extreme Calvinists (after John Calvin), believe that God "pre-determines" and "pre-dictates" all things in our lives. I believe this view is incorrect and leads to the mistake of calling evil good by

attributing everything that happens to God's will. This errant view mandates the conclusion that since good and evil both come from God's will, and God is only good, then the evil we suffer is really good since it comes from the hand of God. Thus, evil only appears evil. Evil really is good because it's of God. I believe many well-intentioned Calvinistic believers fall into this woe:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! **Is. 5:20.**

Such a believer recently told me that, "I have no choice. I don't want to have a choice. God alone is responsible for whatever I think and do." For these Calvinistic believers, God has pre-ordained all events in His pre-eternal will. These include all of the thoughts, emotions, decisions and destinies of all men. Consider the following quotes from John Calvin himself:

The believers' comfort in trouble is that everything they endure is ordained and commanded by God and that they are in his hands. . . . Everything that could harm them is under his control: even Satan, with all his malevolence, is on a tight rein and no danger can threaten the believer unless God wills it. . . . Everything is controlled by God's secret purpose, and nothing can happen except by his knowledge and will. . . . What we must prove is that single events are ordered by God and that every event comes from his intended will. Nothing happens by chance. . . . From furthest eternity, he ruled on what he should do, according to his own wisdom, and now, by his power, he carries out what he decided then. So we maintain that, by his Providence, not only heaven and earth and all inanimate things, but also the minds and wills of men are controlled in such a way that they move precisely in the course he has destined. . . . Augustine consistently teaches that if anything is left to luck, the world moves at random. And although he states elsewhere, that everything is carried out partly by man's free will and partly by God's Providence, he also shows clearly enough his real meaning. That is that men are controlled by Providence, since it would be absurd to believe that anything happens without God's ordination, because then it would happen at random. For this reason, he also excludes any happening which depends on human will, stating in clear terms that no cause must be looked for except the will of God. When he uses the term permission, he means that the will of God is the supreme and primary cause of everything, because nothing happens without his order or permission.

The Institutes of Christian Religion, John Calvin, pp. 71-75, Baker Book House (2001).

Seen in this wrong light, God is a master puppeteer whose limitless strings pull the limitless leashes on all the powerless performers in the world: man, Satan, history, nature, death, destruction, repentance and faith are all manipulated exclusively by the sovereign strings of God. Every event in our lives is at the express command of God. As Calvin pointed out, there is no real distinction between what God actively does and what God passively permits. God's will is done in every situation - - period. Even though an

event appears evil, God is in control of the event and has a secret plan for bringing good out of it. In other words, God uses evil as a chisel which He uses to sculpt us into worthy servants. Sickness, death and destruction are among God's tools He uses to develop us. Satan himself is also a tool, a servant on a leash which God intentionally uses to disciple us with affliction.

Under this flawed view, we are all playing with "loaded dice." Whatever we do, it's God's will. Whatever we fail to do, it's God's will. Whatever we choose, it's God's will. Whatever we fail to choose, it's God's will. Whatever Satan does, it's God's will. The loaded dice of events will always roll the same result - - God's will. Freewill, in this view, is freewill only in the sense that it is "compatible" with God's will. We may think we are making a free choice, but all we are doing is making the good or evil choice God has already specifically commissioned us to make. From the womb, God has already determined, declared and empowered who will make evil choices and who will make good choices. We are out of this decision-making loop altogether. We are already destined to succeed or fail in our spiritual walk and there is absolutely nothing we can do to change it.

The problem with this Calvinistic view is that it plays a "shell game" with evil. Calvinists quite properly reject the view that an all-powerful God must be partially evil due to the unchecked wickedness in the world. Yet, Calvinists adopt just as warped a view in holding that the unchecked wickedness in the world is really not evil because it is a necessary part of a larger picture where God's "secret plan" is progressing perfectly. Evil is seen as the necessary shadow upon God's cosmic canvass which allows the colors of good to be clearly seen. What has subtly occurred is a blameshift. Like Adam, who blamed the fall on "the woman You [God] gave me," Calvinism now unintentionally but unavoidably glorifies evil as a part of God's overall goodness. Evil has now been called good in violation of Is. 5:20. Now, evil must be reluctantly embraced as God's bad-tasting medicine, not violently resisted as Satan's foul attack. Evil is now acknowledged, accommodated and accepted as a legitimate but unpleasant modus operandi of God. God's love now mutates from Daddy's pure and natural love into an unnatural and seemingly sadistic loathing from God which tortures men into becoming good.

Calvinism bases its theology largely on Romans 9-11. These are admittedly difficult verses, but when put in their right context and balance with other New Testament teachings, their proper meaning comes into focus.

- C. Before we consider the challenging verses in Romans 9-11, let's first look at two passages within these same chapters which richly support the freewill of man and the absolute goodness of God.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, **Whosoever** believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto **all that call** upon him. For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Rom. 10:9-13.

These verses are unequivocal that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Whosoever means whosoever. Paul isn't narrowing the playing field here by saying only an elect few will be saved. Paul is expanding the field by saying anybody, Jew or Gentile, who calls in faith will be saved by the Lord who is rich unto all that call upon Him.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. Rom. 11:22.

What a wonderful verse. Many stern Calvinists tell us we must behold the "severity" of the Lord in our lives as we suffer affliction and oppression. But, this verse says just the opposite. God's severity is only toward those who reject faith in God. But toward us who believe we behold nothing but goodness as we "continue in His goodness." God's severity is never toward believers. Hallelujah!

- D. Let's now dive into the challenging verses of Romans 9-11. At the outset, we must consider the overall point Paul was making. These chapters deal with the nation of Israel falling away from God's favor because of their rejection of Christ. Paul points out that not all Jews rejected Jesus and that there is a righteous Hebrew remnant (Rom. 9:1-6; 11:5). However, the nation of Israel had fallen away and Paul was in great anguish about it. Paul's topic in Romans 9-11 is primarily about the election and rejection of Israel as a nation, not about the election and rejection of individual men. Jesus taught that both men and nations will be separately judged (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:31-33). This background leads us to our first challenging passage.

1. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or

evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Rom. 9:10-13.

I have had more than one person cite these verses to attempt to show that God loves certain men and hates others. In fact, these persons believe that God hates the guts of certain unborn babies whom he has predestined and predetermined will grow up evil. This is the wrong way of interpreting these verses.

- a. First, the word "hate" is used in this passage not in the sense of outright emotional disgust and venomous resentment. Rather, the word is used to mean "loving less." Charles Hodge, the greatest American theologian of the nineteenth century, stated this view in his commentary on Romans concerning this passage, "It is evident that in this case the word hate means to love less, to regard and treat with less favor." Hate is certainly used this way in other key passages. In Gen. 29:32-33 "hatred" is used of Jacob's feelings for Leah, when in truth the clear meaning of the passage is that Jacob loves and favors Rachel more than Leah. The NIV translates this verse as Leah saying, "I am not loved." Lk. 14:26 likewise uses the term "hate" in the sense of "loving less." If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Lk. 14:26. Jesus is obviously not teaching us to hate our parents, siblings and children, for that would contradict thousands of other scriptures. Jesus is saying we must "love them less" than we do the Lord. There is not any other verse in the Bible where God is said to hate any individual man, so using this verse to substantiate the view that God hates individual men is dangerously unwarranted. God hates evil deeds, not evil men (Rev. 2:6). God loves all men. Christ died for all men. Christ offers salvation and forgiveness to all men. But, not all men choose to receive God's free gift of salvation. But God even loves those who reject Him. Jesus loved the rich young ruler who rejected His call (Mk. 10:21-22). Jesus healed the ear of a soldier who came to arrest Him (Lk. 22:51). Jesus asked forgiveness for all who killed Him (Lk. 23:34). Consider the quote of Michael Green,

The love of God, with arms extended on a cross, bars the way to hell. But if that love is ignored, rejected, and finally refused, there comes a time

when love can only weep while man pushes past into the self-chosen alienation which Christ went to the cross to avert.

Michael Green, p. 166, *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations*, Westminster John Knox Press, (2001).

- b. Second, Paul uses Jacob and Esau to represent God's election of nations, not the election of individual men. Paul was addressing the arrogant presumption of nationalistic Jews who believed Israel was the only chosen nation (people) of God, regardless of their corporate level of faith. Paul's purpose in these chapters is to show that election is now not by nation but by individual faith alone. Paul in these verses is tracing back the historical development of Israel as God's chosen nation (people). In Romans 9 Paul acknowledges the Israelite nation as the blessed recipient of "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom. 9:4-5). He traces back the call of God through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is in this process that Paul quotes with regard to Jacob and Esau:

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Rom. 9:11-13.

Paul quotes verse 12 from Micah 1:2-3. These verses in Micah are clearly referring to Jacob and Esau not as individuals but as the nations of Israel and Edom. That Paul was referring to the call of a nation (Israel) rather than the call of an individual in these verses is highlighted in the following passage from F. F. Bruce's commentary on Romans 9:11-13.

'The elder will serve the younger.' From the birth oracle to Rebekah (Gn. 25:23). The prophecy relates not to the individuals Esau and Jacob (for Esau never rendered service to Jacob) but to their descendants; it relates to the long periods during which the Edomites were in servitude to Israel or Judah (cf. 2 Sa. 8:14; 1 Ki. 22:47; 2 Ki. 14:7; etc.).

'Jacob, I loved, but Esau I hated.' From Malachi 1:2-3, where again the context indicates it is the nations Israel and Edom, rather than their individual ancestors Jacob and Esau, that are in view. The way in which communities can be so freely spoken of in terms of their ancestors is an

example of the common oscillation in biblical (and especially Old Testament) thought and speech between individual and corporate personality (cf. exposition of 5:12-21, p. 120, n. 1). Israel was the elect nation, and Edom incurred the wrath of God for its unbrotherly conduct towards Israel in the day of Israel's calamity (cf. Ps. 137:7; Is. 34:5 ff.; Je. 49:7 ff.; Ezk. 25:12 ff.; 35:1 ff.; Ob. 10 ff.).

F. F. Bruce, Tyndall New Testament Commentaries, Revised Edition, Romans, p. 182.

The nation Israel sprang from Jacob and the nation of Edom sprang from Esau. Interestingly, in Amos 8:11-12, Edom is used figuratively to represent the Gentiles. Romans 9 seems to echo the use of Esau as a symbol of the Gentile nations by starting off comparing and contrasting Jacob and Esau, and then concluding by comparing and contrasting Israel and the Gentiles. This allows for the possibility that this whole passage is dealing with the calling of Israel versus the calling of all the Gentile nations, and how their respective favor\disfavor from God has now essentially flip-flopped with each other. (Rom. 9:25-26, 30-33). All the Gentile nations are now favored through faith in Christ, while national Israel has reaped disfavor from God because of their corporate and continual unbelief. But even that will change when national Israel is grafted back into favor as they become jealous of the nation of faith which fills the earth. (Rom. 11:11-30). But in the beginning Israel was the only chosen nation because of the faith Abraham sowed in response to God's promise. Paul's point in these verses is that Israel's election as a chosen nation was already determined in Rachel's womb. The Edomites were not God's chosen nation, even though they too were Isaac's seed. The key reason Edom could not be God's chosen nation was that Jesus was not in their seed. God loved Esau less not because Esau was an evil baby in Rachel's womb. God loved Jacob more because he carried the seed of Jesus in him. God did ordain that through the protected seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. all the nations of the world would be blessed through the birth of one seed - - Jesus the Christ (Gal. 3:16).

Science is settled on the point that fraternal twins, which Jacob and Esau were, come from entirely separate sperm and eggs. Thus, there was a world of genetic difference between Jacob and Esau, a difference large enough to ultimately spawn two entirely separate nations. Only one of these nations had the

exact genetic input to produce the destined seed of Jesus - - Israel. God had promised Abraham his seed would bless all nations, but God also promised that the chosen seed would come from the people which would come to occupy the specific boundaries of the promised land. (Gen. 13:14-18; 15; 17; Acts 17:26). Esau and Edom could never fit this bill, thus only through Jacob and Israel could the blessed and prophesied seed come - - the seed of Jesus.

Nonetheless, God still greatly loved Esau and the Edomites as individuals, even if they did not stand in corporate favor with God. That God loved Esau and the Edomites is established by Isaac's blessing of Esau (Gen. 27:39), the inclusion in scripture of Edomite genealogies (Gen. 36; 1 Chr. 1), God's apparent siding with Edom against the Moabites (Amos 2:1-2), and, most importantly, the clear injunction of Dt. 23:7, "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother." These mercies toward Esau and Edom hardly support the view that God hates their guts. They were certainly less favored corporately than was Israel, but God continued to love them dearly, for that is His nature. God is love and God loves all men.

Israel was only chosen as a nation because it carried the seed of Jesus within it. Abraham received this seed by faith from the Lord when he believed God for the miraculous birth of Isaac. Thus, it was God's election of Abraham's seed made possible through Abraham's faith in receiving the promises for the nation of Israel, the birth of Jesus and ultimately the bride of Christ - - the church. Once Jesus arrived and imparted His righteousness to mankind, then no longer was a national election needed. Faith had come to all nations. The Holy Spirit had come. His bride, body and church had arrived. No longer was there Jew or Gentile, but one new man (Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:12-15). Similarly, we are not the elect because God loves us more than other men. We are of the elect because we have received the seed of Christ into our being by the exercise of our faith. Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **according to the faith of God's elect**, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; Titus 1:1-2. God loves all men the same, but men each receive different levels of that love based on their respective faith. Faith allows us to receive and embrace our pre-destined walk of good works and

anointed living.

2. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Rom. 9:14-18.

These verses are often cited by Calvinists for three propositions:

God predetermines and predestines mercy to some men and not others;

Man's freewill plays no part in salvation, while God's mercy predetermines all offers of salvation as well as compelling all acceptances;

God, by His own hidden counsel, softens the hearts of certain men and hardens the hearts of others.

These three assertions form the framework for the Calvinistic view that man has no freewill to choose anything, but rather all men's choices are predetermined and pre-dictated by the will of God. I will deal with these erroneous assertions in order:

- a. God's mercy is not reserved for a limited number of men. The Calvinist view here pictures the great supper of the lamb to be "by select invitation only." The only ones who will be allowed entrance are those who can show an engraved invitation sent to only an elect few while gestating in their mother's womb. All other men were never sent this invitation in the womb and cannot obtain one during their lifetime regardless of what choices they make, what Gospel they hear and what prayers they utter. The problem with this view is that it contradicts too many other scriptures that hold that God desires and allows the opportunity for all men to be saved (Ez. 18:23, 32; 33:11; Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:2). Moreover, it contradicts Paul's other teachings in Romans 10:11,13 which clearly state that "whosoever" believes and calls on Jesus will be saved - - no limitations, provisions or stipulations. Jesus

taught that He died for all men, thus all men are invited and capable of accepting the free gift of salvation. That **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Jn. 3:15-16.

If a man were prejudged and predestined incapable of accepting the Lord's invitation, then the invitation is faulty, insincere and ineffectual. If the blood of Jesus cleansed the sin of the world (all men), then all men have a real invitation, a real opportunity, a real choice of life or death to be made (1 Jn. 2:2; Dt. 30:19-20). Does this mean that all men choose life, believe in Jesus, and call on the name of the Lord? Of course not. Men are free to reject or accept, to believe or not, and to love God or not. The dice are not loaded.

But, does God know before we are born what choices we will make? Extreme Calvinists believe not only does God pre-know our choices, but He also predetermines them. Some Arminians believe God may pre-know our choices but that He doesn't predetermine them. Still others believe that there is nothing for God to pre-know until the moment we actually choose. Under this view, a choice is not a choice until it's made. God has, by His own power, made our choices "unknowable" ahead of time, even to Himself. When God made freewill, He voluntarily withdrew any predetermining coercive power from the wills of men. God has what theologians call a "covenant of non-coercion" with man which He will not break.

Another complication in this question comes from God existing both within and outside of time simultaneously. If the eternal life of God is outside of the space-time continuum, then His ability to navigate in and out of our time is certainly beyond our ability to fully understand. Ephesians 2:6 tells us we are seated now with Christ in Heavenly places. Does this mean that somehow we are already with God outside of time in His eternal kingdom? If so, we are, like God, simultaneously present both inside and outside of time. Could this mean that all men who ever choose Christ are already seated with Christ now in His eternal Kingdom where there is no beginning or ending? Perhaps we are the sons of God referred to in Job 1:6 and 2:1. Perhaps we as the elect have always been with God. Perhaps our choice here gives us retroactive entry into God's

eternity. If so, we are not saved because we are seated now with Jesus in heavenly places. No, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places because we choose to believe in Christ while here in this life. God's powerful goodness makes these possibilities almost paradoxical, yet scriptures are clear that our entry into God's eternity is based on the grace we receive in this life based on our faith in this life. (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 10:8-10; Jn. 3:3-8).

A foundational point in this whole existence is that God gave us the gift of freewill, a gift He will never violate or take back. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Rom. 11:29. He is a powerful and loving Father, not a cruel puppeteer who manipulates us for His own enjoyment. He has called all men to receive forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yet only those who by faith choose to are able to receive the gift of God. This is why Jesus taught that many are called but few are chosen. (Matt. 20:16).

It is like a million dollar check we have been freely given by a wonderful benefactor. We have done nothing to earn it, but we must do something to actually receive the funds - - endorse and present the check. Without the endorsement, the funds are never transferred to us, deposited by us and used for us. We can walk around with an unendorsed million dollar check in our shirt pocket, but it is not our million until we endorse it and present it to a bank.

So it is with salvation. All men have been given the million dollar check of salvation which comes from the blood of Jesus shed for the sins of the world. But, only those men who endorse Jesus with their faith and present Jesus by their confession actually receive the provision of salvation (Rom. 10:8-10).

- b. The second erroneous Calvinistic assertion drawn from the Romans 9:14-18 passage is that God's mercy alone determines and dictates salvation, not any decision or act of man. While I heartily agree that God's mercy alone is the absolute source of all salvation, it is the exercise of faith alone which serves as the instrument to receive God's grace. For **by grace** are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of

works, lest any man should boast. Eph. 2:8-9. Faith is not a work. I can't will myself to have faith in God by my own mental determination. I can't perform any act which earns or merits my receiving God's grace. However, faith is a heart decision to receive and respond to the promises of God.

Going back to our previous example, I did nothing to earn the million dollar check, yet I had to endorse it and present it to truly receive it. Faith then is our posture of trust in accepting God's grace. We love God only because He first loved us, yet we must receive that love before we can truly possess it and return it to God. This passage in Romans is merely stating that no one can work or mentally will their way to God on their own. Each man must first receive God's prompting in their heart by believing (endorsing) and confessing (presenting) the promise as true. Everything in God's economy is about learning to receive what has already been freely given at the cross and Pentecost. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1 Cor. 2:12. **Faith is a response to God's grace, not a cause of God's grace.** If ever faith is taught as a cause of God's grace, then this false teaching mutates faith into a work. It is this error, I am sure, that the Calvinists seek to avoid.

However, the Calvinists err to the other extreme when they teach that man's response of faith is totally predetermined, pre-dictated and pre-established by God before birth. The call of Israel as a nation was certainly assured to be the corporate womb which would produce the protected seed of Jesus. This seed was according to the faith of Abraham who received and responded to God's call and promise. That much was settled by God and could not be thwarted until the coming of the Messiah. This is why the nation of Israel was protected by God from the destructions of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Greece and Rome. God did not dictate that generation after generation of Israel would be "forced" to be faithful to God's covenant from Abraham to Jesus. In fact, many of those generations of Israelites were largely unfaithful. Ten of the twelve tribes were dispersed out into the world. Yet, God did not allow Israel as a nation to be extinguished. God protected the tribe of Judah because it carried the seed of Jesus, not because

Judah was holier than the ten lost tribes. This Romans' passage then is about, and only about, how God chose Israel through the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (whose name was Israel) rather than the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Esau.

- c. Many Calvinists also cite this Romans' passage for the idea that God hardens the hearts of men from being able to choose salvation. The implication here is that God violates our freewill, or according to Calvinism God absolutely controls our freewill. The passage cites Pharaoh as an example of someone whose heart was hardened by God. This passage says God first raised Pharaoh up, which preference F. F. Bruce believes, "may be not only to God's raising up Pharaoh to be king, but to His patience in preserving him alive for so long, in spite of his disobedience."

Tyndall New Testament Commentaries, F. F. Bruce, Inter-Varsity Press, 19, p. 183 (1985).

But, next the passage says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and the hearts of the Egyptians during the ten plagues of the Exodus (Ex. 9:12; 14:4). Calvinists take this to mean that God took over Pharaoh's will. In other words, God loaded the dice in this situation. This interpretation is wrong because it omits other passages which clearly state that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God (Ex. 8:32; 9:34). This is entirely consistent with the governing dynamics of God. God shows us mercy after mercy after mercy in giving us space to repent and opportunity to draw close to Him. But, if we refuse and continue to sow seeds of unbelief, then God's protective presence must progressively withdraw from our lives or our freewill will be violated. God didn't harden Pharaoh's heart as a direct affirmative act. God withdrew His mercy from Pharaoh because Pharaoh hardened his own heart first when he killed all the male Israelite newborns.

For God to withdraw His mercy is like severe drought which hardens the soil. Pharaoh's heart was further hardened as God progressively withdrew His mercy from Pharaoh after each plague. Pharaoh's heart was not hardened because God's presence acted violently upon Pharaoh's heart but because God's presence reluctantly abandoned Pharaoh to his own evil reaping. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your

hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Jas. 4:8. This is the concept of divine attraction and repulsion. God first sends His love to us. If we draw near to Him in response, then He draws even nearer to us. If we pull away from Him, then God must withdraw somewhat. His withdrawal is never proportionate to our withdrawal because His love is stronger than His judgment. If we pull away a mile, God will grudgingly withdraw an inch. Yet, it is still a mandatory withdrawal because of the freewill law of sowing and reaping. But if we continually sow to the flesh, the "inches" of God's reluctant withdrawals eventually add up to feet and miles.

When we examine scripture, we see that God doesn't blind men, Satan does. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Cor. 4:4. (Jn. 12:31; 14:30). We also see in scripture that God is not the agent which hardens hearts. Unbelief is the agent which pressures God's protective presence away from our hearts, which results in our hearts growing even more parched and hardened. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Heb. 3:8-19.

These verses clearly attribute hardness of heart to come from sin, unbelief and not hearing God. The result of this continual "departing from the living God" (v. 12) results in greater and greater hardening of the heart. Eventually, God's presence is completely withdrawn as we are "given over" to our unbelief (Rom. 1:21-28). Also consider John 12:40. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes,

nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. Jn. 12:40. If the "He" in this verse is Satan and the "I" is God, then again we see that Satan is involved in the hardening of hearts as well. Jesus clearly taught that the primary cause in hardness of heart is unbelief. (Mk. 16:14; 8:17-21). The only sense in which God hardens hearts is the resultant drought which occurs in a sinner's heart as the sinner pressures away the protective presence of God.

3. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. Rom. 9:19-23.

Paul here quotes the potter\clay analogy from Jeremiah 18. It is vital to note that Jer. 18:7-10 confirms this analogy concerns nations, not individuals. To apply it to individuals is to stretch it out of context. As Gregory Boyd points out, God treats groups (nations) differently than individuals (men). This difference is highlighted at even the sub-atomic level of existence. Quantum physics prove that while the mechanistic laws of Newtonian physics may accurately predict how large groups of particles will behave in a given event, how individual quantum particles exactly behave is unpredictable. In nature, ants operate similarly. As a group, activity is predictable, but not so on an individual level. Weather patterns echo this tension between general predictability and specific unpredictability. What God destines for nations simply does not apply to individual free will.

Consider the following commentary on these verses by Gregory Boyd:

"[W]e begin to understand what is misguided about the deterministic interpretation of Romans 9 when we consider its interpretation of the potter-clay analogy that Paul uses in Romans 9:20-23. In the deterministic interpretation, it is assumed that the clay has no 'say' in how it is fashioned; the potter decides everything. This, I submit, is not at all how Paul understood this analogy.

It is important to remember that Paul did not invent this analogy; he found it in the Old Testament. Moreover, the Old Testament passage that is the source of this analogy employs it to make the exact

opposite point that those who espouse the deterministic reading of Romans 9 think Paul is making with it.

In Jeremiah 18 the Lord shows Jeremiah a potter working on a vessel. 'The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him' (Jer. 18:4). The Lord then says, 'Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? . . . Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel' (Jer. 18:5-6).

As we discussed in chapter three, the Lord says that since he is the potter and can do whatever he wants with the clay, he will recant prophecies of fortune or misfortune if the people he prophesies about change for better or for worse (Jer. 18:7-11). As a master potter, he reserves for himself the right to rework vessels whenever he sees fit. God can and will change his plans if people change their hearts. Hence the Lord reassures the Israelites that though their sin has 'spoiled' the vessel he was making out of them, as a masterful potter he can refashion a new vessel out of them if they, the clay, will allow him to. If they repent, he will repent of the judgment he intended to bring on them.

When Paul used this analogy to explain why God had mercy on Moses and hardened Pharaoh, therefore, we need not conclude that this entails that Moses and Pharaoh had no say in how they were made. Quite the opposite. As in Jeremiah, the 'clay' Paul is referring to is not some preexistent clay of humanity out of which the Lord arbitrarily fashions individuals to suit his own eternal purposes - - that is, to demonstrate his wrath or mercy. It is rather the clay of people's lives in history. As in Jeremiah 18, people make themselves 'spoiled' or pliable, and God responds by reworking them in this state 'as seem[s] . . . good to him' (Jer. 18:4) - - always in accordance with their pliable or hardened hearts.

This is why Paul says that God 'endured with much patience' the vessels he was preparing for destruction (Rom. 9:22). Why would he need much patience if the vessel was 'spoiled' according to his own design? Why would he say, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people' (Rom. 10:21), quoting Is. 65:2, if he was the one molding them to be disobedient in the first place? Finally, one must wonder why an all-holy, all-loving God who 'does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone' (Lam. 3:33) would intentionally

fashion 'spoiled' people in the first place.

The patience and frustration of God toward the vessels that he prepared for 'destruction' makes no sense on the deterministic interpretation, but it makes perfect sense if we understand them in the light of Jeremiah 18. This understanding of God's use of Pharaoh also squares best with the Exodus narrative about Pharaoh that Paul relies on in using his analogy. It is important to note (as the rabbis of Paul's day frequently did) that the first acts of hardening in the Exodus narrative depicting God as hardening Pharaoh's heart are done by Pharaoh himself (Ex. 8:15, 32). God simply used Pharaoh's hardening to suit his own providential purposes. He desires 'to show his wrath and make known his power' (Rom. 9:22) in order to intimidate Israel's future adversaries.

When Paul responds to the charge of injustice by asking, 'Who . . . are you, a human being, to argue with God?' (Rom. 9:20), he is not thereby appealing to the sheer power of the potter over the clay. He is rather appealing to the rights of a wise and just potter to fashion clay according to his providential purposes and in a manner that is appropriate, given the kind of clay with which he has to work. If Israel persists in their rebellion, the potter hardens them and prepares them for destruction. If Gentile and Jewish believers persist in their simple faith, God has mercy on them and fashions out of them a beautiful vessel displaying his own eternal glory (Rom. 9:21-23).

This fashioning may look arbitrary, especially to hardened Jews who believed that they were the 'vessel of honor' simply by virtue of being Jewish. As in Jeremiah 18, however, Paul's use of this analogy demonstrates that this kind of Jewish thinking and the charge of arbitrary injustice that rises from it is incorrect. God's activity in history is not arbitrary; it is just and wise. Moreover, to the offense of many Jews at the time, the possibility of being clay fashioned into a vessel that displays God's glory is open to Jews and Gentiles alike. It all depends on whether or not one is willing to seek after the righteousness of God that comes by faith, not works (Rom. 9:30-32; 10:3-5,12-13| 11:22-23)."

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 361-364.

As a final note concerning Romans 9-11, "it is worth noting that this passage was not interpreted in a deterministic fashion prior to

Augustine in the fourth century (with the exception of certain Gnostics and the Manicheans)¹. Once the blueprint model of providence became established in the church, the interpretation became common (though prior to Calvin, few carried it through as consistently as Augustine). This may suggest that the deterministic reading of this passage is at least partially the result of people bringing to the text an assumed world view (the blueprint world view) that Paul (and the early postapostolic fathers) did not share.”

Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 360-361.

- E. I want to emphasize that I am only addressing the concepts of predestination and freewill as they pertain to the issue of God’s goodness. There are millions of questions about predestination, many of which are unblest and/or unanswerable. However, the key issue is answerable - - God predestines all men for His goodness. Satan also predestines all men for destruction (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Man uses his freewill to choose which predestiny he will embrace. It’s that simple. Certainly there are events in the tide of history which have been to varying degrees predestined by God, resisted by men and impeded by Satan. However, in all of this God has never violated the freewill of a man. Nor has God acted unworthily by initiating, aiding, abetting or actively allowing evil in any way. Nor has God loaded the dice of events unfairly against any man. God is fair. More than fair. God has invited all nations and men aboard His “A” trains of salvation, healing and deliverance. These trains run according to God’s predestined schedules, however who will actually board the trains remains an open question. Satan also has trains of sickness, oppression and destruction predestined for all nations and individuals. That such destruction is scheduled to occur is set, but who will actually board these trains is an open question yet to be determined by the free will of men. God has predestined His bride, His body and His church to walk in supernatural strength, anointing and victory. Yet, the actual membership of God’s family is open-ended for whoever believes and acts on the spirit-revealed word of God. This is why all men are already written in the Lamb’s book of eternal life; but as men

¹ M. Parmentier, “Greek Church Fathers on Romans 9,” *Bijdragen* 50 (1989): 139-54; 51 (1990): 2-20; J. Patout Burns, “The Atmosphere of Election: Augustinianism As Common Sense,” *J ECS* 2 (1994): 325-39; Peter Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9-11 in Origin, John Chrysostom, and Augustine*, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 4 (New York: Mellen, 1983). This in part explains why Calvin, for example, cannot cite ante-Nicene fathers against his libertarian opponents (e.g., Pighius). On Calvin’s use of patristic sources, see Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong, eds., *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Index [Calvin As Protector of the Purer Religion]*, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 36 (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997). Hence, when Calvin debates Pighius on the freedom of the will, he cites Augustine abundantly. I will explore this Augustinian shift more fully in my forthcoming book, *The Myth of the Blueprint*.

reject, neglect or unselect the invitation, then God reluctantly must "blot out" their names. (Ex. 32:33; Rev. 3:5; 22:18). This "blotting out" concept means that all men are already provisionally saved; but as they fail to receive the free gift of God, then they lose their position by being tearfully blotted out by a loving Father who has been wilfully rejected by faithless men. I freely admit that I can do nothing positive without the Lord's leading and empowerment. (Jn. 5:19, 30; 15:5). Nothing, that is, except to accept or reject the Lord's leading and empowerment. (Dt. 30:19-20). As the ancient rabbis taught, everything is in God's hands except devotion to God. Devotion is our portion, our calling and our response to God's limitless grace.

CONCLUSION

I recently experienced a vision where I saw God wearing Samurai armour. I knew this armour was wrong and did not accurately convey who God really was. Yet, I could still feel love coming out from behind the armour. God did not abandon me even though I was projecting wrong images which blocked me from seeing His true nature. I then peeled off the Samurai armour from around God. But as I stepped back, I could see there was another suit of armour underneath. This armour was medieval in style. I could see God a little more clearly and truer to form. Yet, the armour still obscured a pure vision of God. I then pulled off layer after layer of this armour until there was nothing man-made left between God and me. There were no more barriers to intimacy.

I could now see God in His truest form - - an incredibly muscular shepherd. I asked the Lord what the armour symbolized. His reply was that the armour represents the wrong ideas of God we project onto His being. These wrong ideas block, hinder, obscure, twist or deform our image of God. The result - - a distant and remote relationship with our Lord. It is no coincidence that one of the Hebrew definitions of "Satan" means "remoteness" or "the remote one." Satan tries to distort our image of God by deceiving us into projecting wrong armour onto God's being. This wrong armour includes chilling ideas about God causing or actively allowing evil.

The end result is remoteness. Like the frozen planet Pluto which orbits the Sun at the most distant point in the solar system, so too does Satan ("the remote one") seek to obstruct and distance our orbit of intimacy around the Lord. As we strip the false armour of wrong ideas about God, our orbit around God's goodness and true nature draws closer and closer. Eventually, like the hot planet Mercury, we will burn with the pure fire of God which can only come from unhindered intimacy and holiness. Though God loved us the same when we orbited remotely around Him, we are the ones who are now able to love Him more and more as we draw ever closer to Him. As we strip away the armour of misconceptions about God, we are able to embrace Him flesh to flesh and heart to heart. As we remove all man-made barriers, we are free to see Him as Jesus saw the Father - - pure love, pure goodness and pure strength.

While this teaching is over, our voyage into God's goodness is just beginning. My prayer is that this study has equipped you to become fully persuaded of God's goodness. Not only is God not guilty of committing evil, He is also not guilty of allowing evil in any active or direct sense. Jesus Christ is the absolute provision from God to defeat every form of evil we encounter. To receive this provision, we must have the right view of God. I believe this study has exposed four basic views of God. Only one of them produces true faith. Choose yours carefully. These four views of God are:

God as Puppeteer: In this view, God pulls all the strings of all created beings all of the

time. Man, Satan, angels and demons are all on God's leashes without any freewill. Wrong!

God as Jekyll and Hyde: In this view, God is schizophrenic. He is a lover who may bless us today, but may transform into a monster tomorrow as He afflicts us with sickness, disaster and death. Wrong!

God as Good Cop\Bad Cop with Satan: In this view, God is the good cop to Satan's bad cop. God plays it nice with us for as long as we cooperate. But, when we fail to obey, God leaves the room and loosens the bad cop (Satan) on us to cruelly manipulate, intimidate and dominate us into cooperating with God. In this view, God and Satan are on the same side. They just use different tactics. Wrong!

God as Superman: This is the correct view. God is a super hero. He never does evil. He never allows evil when He is called on in faith to stop it. He patrols, rescues and protects all the citizens of His city of light. He never violates the freewill of men, but He will do everything He can to encourage and strengthen the wills of men. He fights villainy in every form. He is flawless and fearless. The only thing that can drive His presence away is the Kryptonite of unbelief. We must find all the hidden Kryptonite in our lives and destroy it, or God will not have full access to deliver us from every enemy. God is both the ship and destination of this voyage we have been on. May God's goodness be our standard and may we continually eat, drink and breathe His blessings.