

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

(2 Corinthians 9:15)

Jesus

God's Inexpressible Gift to You

Jan Blonk

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Jesus: God's Inexpressible Gift to You

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Introduction

The goal of this book is simple: to write with plain language, emphasizing that God has freely given you an inexpressible gift that's far beyond your imagination. His gift to you is far better and far greater than you can even begin to comprehend.

Without question, even one percent of understanding would be worth more than all the riches of this world. That's quite a claim. Throughout these pages, I want to share the truth of that statement. There are thirty short chapters and each one will take about three minutes to read. Will you take the time to do so and learn why Jesus is *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*?

As with any gift, it has to be received. The same is true with Jesus. This receiving is by faith, which is believing in who Jesus is and what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do. The Bible emphasizes that faith is not only believing certain facts about Jesus but an actual coming to Him.

For example, if you were to receive a letter in the mail from your local grocery store, stating that you have been selected to claim a \$500 gift card within ten days, your faith in what they wrote will be evident by believing the offer *and* by going to the store and receiving the gift card. Just believing the facts wouldn't do you any good.

The Bible ends with a universal invitation, which includes you: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (Revelation 22:17). Faith or unbelief will be evidenced by one's coming or lack of coming.

This short book is made up of three sections. The first section is about the reason *why* you need Jesus as *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*. Whether you realize this or not, you have a definite need for Jesus, even right now.

The second section is about Jesus as *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*. It is about who He is and what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do. The last section is about the faith that believes *and* comes to Jesus. It's far more than a \$500 gift card, though.

These three sections are about *The Need*, *The Gift*, and *The Response*, covering ten days each. They are about *your* need, God's gift to *you*, and *your* response to His gift. What if you had thrown the grocery store letter away without ever opening it? You would've thrown a \$500 gift card away.

Will you at least read this "letter" and base your response on what this "letter" has to share with you? It's about far more than just a \$500 gift card. It's about your temporal

and eternal well-being, which is priceless, right?

When you look up the word *priceless*, it means “having a value beyond any price” (Merriam-Webster). That’s what this book is about. Your temporal and eternal well-being is “beyond any price.” Incredibly, it’s freely offered to you without having to meet any condition.

The stakes are incomprehensibly high. Thus, the Bible uses confrontive language at times because it wants to shake you to the core in order to get your attention. If you were asleep while a fire has started in your kitchen, it wouldn’t do you any good if someone whispers that truth in your ears, right? Instead, the best thing to do is to be as loud as possible when it comes to that destructive reality.

The Bible also uses “loud” language. For example, we read: “For whoever finds me [Jesus] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:35-36).

Without question, your very life is at stake. You don’t have the guarantee that the fire won’t soon devour your bedroom—you don’t have the guarantee of tomorrow. Will you love your life by finding Jesus, or will you love death by rejecting *God’s Inexpressible Gift to You*?

The Need

The Background

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27

As a teenager, I became fascinated and intrigued by one’s background. Why does a person act the way he acts? Often, if we knew the background, we would gain a more proper understanding for his actions. A new-born son of an outspoken racist would have a far different upbringing than if he had been born to an outspoken non-racist, right?

In order to properly understand God’s inexpressible gift to you, you need to know the background. It starts with the first verse in the Bible: “In the beginning, God . . .” (Genesis 1:1). Unless we start with God, we will always lack the proper understanding of creation and history. He is ultimate and we are not. He is the creator and we are *His* creatures. To deny God’s existence is to reject truth and reality. What is left is an utter deception.

When God made man, He made them as male and female. His design was clear: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” You and I have been created to be an image-bearer of God, showing forth His likeness.

That doesn’t refer to any physical similarities—God is Spirit—but in doing what is good and right. Since God is perfectly good and right, He cannot do anything but that which is perfectly good and right. He fully acts according to His divine nature. He cannot do otherwise.

After He had created Adam and Eve in His image and after His likeness, there was perfect harmony and peace between God and man. He delighted in man and man delighted in Him.

Something happened, though, that would prove to be far more disastrous than anything possible. You need to know what happened in order to understand who you are today, especially in relation to your creator.

The Need

The Background (2)

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 2:16-17

“And they lived happily ever after.” No, that’s not how the story continued of God’s creation of Adam and Eve. Their delightful fellowship with their creator and with each other would take an irreversible turn, one that involved everyone who would stem from them.

God had placed them in the garden of Eden. As creator, He has full creator-rights, being sovereign over all His creation. He commanded the man, saying: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Their continuing blessedness would be based on their obedience to their creator—to not eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” God had made it unquestionably clear that disobedience would result in death.

This death would be far more than just physical death; it would result in an eternal separation from God upon physical death. That separation, though, would already start when they disobeyed their maker. The Bible refers to that as spiritual deadness, whereby one is “alienated from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18). The vital connection between God and man would be separated through sin in the same way as a cut electricity cord will not be able to convey electricity to an electronic device.

Since God is perfectly holy, He is “of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong” (Habakkuk 1:13). God cannot ignore sin. It goes against everything He is and stands for. His justice won’t allow Him to overlook any wrongdoing. To do so would be God’s denial of Himself, which can never be. He will always be true to Himself.

The Need

The Background (3)

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:4-5

God’s enemy, known as the devil, Satan, and “that ancient serpent” (Revelation 20:2), is one of His created angels. He had rebelled against God. We read that background story in Isaiah: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Satan wanted to be “like the Most High.”

It’s no surprise that the “ancient serpent” enticed Eve with the same bait. He flat-out denied the truth of God’s word and warning. Instead, he portrayed disobedience to God as great gain—as a wonderful advantage that would result in being “like God.”

That’s why the Bible refers to sin as “deceitful desires” (Ephesians 4:22). Sin promises glamour and glory, but only gives you, sooner or later, death and destruction. God’s word doesn’t deny that sin can be enjoyable for the moment, but it is short-lived, even if it’s enjoyable till your last breath. It refers to the enjoyment of disobedience as “the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:25). It describes sin as sweet as honey, but in the end “bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword” (Proverbs 5:3).

To “be like God” was too enticing to ignore. Yet, it was all based on a lie. Jesus referred to Satan as “the father of lies” (John 8:44). To believe him is to believe in a catastrophic deception. The Bible doesn’t so much portray Satan’s strength as his cunning deceit.

The great question that Adam and Eve faced is still the same question that you face: whom do you believe? On whom or what have you based your convictions about God, sin, salvation, judgment, and eternity?

Do you believe what God has said in His word about these five realities, or do you believe what others have said about it. Whether you realize this or not; whether you like

this or not; you have core convictions about those five eternal realities. Are they true or are they false?

The Need

The Background (4)

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8

Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie and, in doing so, they rejected God's truth. They experienced a rude awakening. Instead of becoming "like God," they realized that they were naked. Instead of an utter God-consciousness, enjoying His love, care, and presence, they became self-conscious.

The promised glory had materialized into a devastating loss—the loss of God Himself. While they used to look forward and delight in His presence, it had now become a dreadful reality, especially since His warning would come true, "you shall surely die."

The anticipation and excitement of the moment had turned into a pending judgement with the word *death* stamped upon it. They would reap what they had sown: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The inevitable came about.

In their disobedience, they aligned themselves with "that ancient serpent" and his rebellion against God. Their open rebellion, though, wasn't just an isolated case. Sin and death had entered God's good creation, exercising dominion over them, known as "the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). The earth was cursed because of Adam.

While you may reject God and think you are your own free man, nothing is further from the truth. Mankind became subject to the reign of sin and death. Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34), having eternal separation from God as the final outcome.

Was all hope lost? Would they forever "suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thessalonians

1:9)? No, as we will see in *The Gift*. God gave Adam and Eve (and mankind) the promise of a savior who would come and “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), gaining freedom from sin and death for all who would believe in Him.

The Need

Adam as Our Seed

One trespass led to condemnation for all men . . . by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

Romans 5:18-19

You were wholly involved in Adam's trespass, just like a tree with all its branches is a part of one seed. Adam saw the "no trespassing" sign and trespassed anyway. What about you? Have you ever crossed any of God's "no trespassing" signs?

Job once said: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one" (Job 14:4). When Adam sinned—the head of the human race—there were inevitable results for all who would stem from him. If you were to inject poison into the (feeder) roots of a tree, it would poison the whole tree.

That's what happened with Adam's "one trespass." It led to the "condemnation for all men," including you and I. The entire tree was condemned because the poison had entered the very root of the tree. While you may or may not get upset with Adam, the fact of it cannot be undone. It would be the same as adding a cup of arsenic to a wholesome gallon of fresh milk. It is good for nothing.

As a result of his "one trespass," man would be born in a state of sin and rebellion against God. King David said: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). You and I were born "in sin."

The poison of sin had entered the human race. We have been born as sinners, having an innate enmity against God, whether we do so through blatant sins or just ignoring Him. Jesus said: "A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). The tree of the human race has been contaminated with sin at the very root of it. As such, it can only produce sin.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul made a sweeping statement: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18). He referred to his sinful nature that he was born with. While the outside of an apple from a diseased tree may look appealing and good, the inside is rotten to the core. Jeremiah expressed man's sinful

heart with these words: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). We don't know how rotten we are by nature.

The Need

A Definite Cannot

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8

Even though you may be a small tree limb in top of the most humongous tree in this world—one that has been growing for centuries—you are not independent from nor unrelated to the seed where it all began.

Adam was created as morally innocent. That changed drastically and irreversibly through his “one trespass.” From then on, all moral innocence was lost. Instead, there was sin, death, and condemnation.

Solomon wrote: “See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). The Hebrew word for man is *Adam*, which is used in relation to a single male person or the whole human race.

Notice the connection between *man* and *they*. You and I are part of the *they*. The seed of the human race lost its moral innocence and poisoned itself with sin and rebellion against God. As such, the entire tree has been affected by it.

In today's verses, the apostle Paul described the definite results of that fatal day. “The flesh” refers to our sinful nature that can be traced back to Adam's “one trespass.” Yesterday, we read: “By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners” (Romans 5:19). By nature, we are sinners.

Our sinful nature has been so corrupted by sin that there is a definite cannot: “Those who are in the flesh *cannot* please God.” Would you accept and drink from a wholesome gallon of milk if it contained just one ounce of arsenic? Even so, God cannot accept anything that has been contaminated with sin. It goes against His holy, righteous, and good nature.

Man is inherently hostile toward God. His case is dreadfully serious. Yet, the deceitfulness of sin still runs through his veins. He doesn't realize the perilous state he is in, even believing he is in the right way: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but

its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12). Multitudes experience an endless rude awakening when they pass into eternity.

The Need

Children of Wrath

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath.

Ephesians 2:1-3

If, during a routine physical exam, your physician finds a disturbing and most likely fatal tumor on an x-ray, would you prefer for him to ignore that or to lay it all out on the table? If there was a readily available course of action with a most favorable outcome, would you consider it a crime against you if he withheld the truth about the tumor and the cure? Today's three verses lay it all out on the table.

In writing to Christians, Paul reminded them that they used to be "dead in the trespasses and sins," just like everyone else who stems from Adam. Such spiritual deadness, which is a spiritual unresponsiveness to God and His word, doesn't mean there's no activity. It means that all activity is void of any spiritual life from God. That connection has been severed through sin.

In these three verses, we read that we follow "the course of this world," which is "following the prince of the power of the air." By nature, we follow Satan in his rebellion against God. There is no neutral ground when it comes to God or Satan. One either follows God or one follows Satan.

Man is not an independent creature with spiritual self-governing authority. John made a sharp distinction between "the children of God" and "the children of the devil" (1 John 3:10). By nature, we are "the sons of disobedience." We follow Satan in his rebellion against God, who is *now* at work in everyone who belongs to Adam, being part of his domain. You are not exempt from that reality.

Our sole pursuit in life is to live "in the passions of our flesh," the passions of our sinful nature. As slaves to sin, we carry out its demands, which are "the desires of the body and

the mind." While these passions may be enjoyable for the moment, the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness is hanging over our head, able to strike us down at any moment. We need salvation.

The Need

The Judgment

And this is the judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

John 3:19

As mentioned in the *Introduction*, this book has three distinct sections: *The Need*, *The Gift*, and *The Response*, each covering ten days. Just like a lighted lamp would hardly be noticed, let alone appreciated in broad daylight when the sun is beaming through the windows, even so *God's Inexpressible Gift to You* won't be truly considered, let alone embraced, unless there is an utter need for it.

If you were a betting person when it comes to the truth of God's word, you would gamble with your eternal well-being and your eternal misery. Yes, the stakes are that high. Yet, man's mind is under a demonic spell, like king Théoden in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. He wasn't able to think in accordance with truth. In our case, it is much more than a spell, though. It is part of our fallen nature.

As mentioned before, God gave Adam and Eve (and mankind) the promise of a savior who would come and "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). He would gain freedom from sin and death for all who would believe in Him.

That first promise was a bright ray of light amidst the darkness of sin, death, and judgement. If people were to embrace that promise, they would embrace the one who would conquer sin and death. Anyone's salvation was wholly based on holding fast to God's promise of Jesus. When He came, God's promise was fulfilled. Now, we embrace by faith the one who has conquered sin and death through His righteous life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection.

Nevertheless, "people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." Instead of embracing God's light—the reality of Jesus—they rejected that light and continued in their pursuit of evil.

Mankind has had the light of God's promise since Adam committed his trespass; yet, man not only prefers but loves the darkness of that which is evil. God's judgment will be

based on that kind of love affair that has consistently rejected the light of His salvation. God's light has also exposed such devastating darkness, as we will see next time.

The Need

God's Law

Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 7:7

Why did God give His law, especially the Ten Commandments? Was it a means to gain His favor by living accordingly? Not at all! While mankind was already condemned through Adam's "one trespass," the reality of sin was not as much brought to the surface. It lay dormant, so to speak.

That dormancy, though, was not a passive principle that didn't affect man's very life and being. Certainly, sin was rampant before God gave His law. Man's inherent sinfulness was the dominant principle that God defined when He announced the universal flood: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every* intention of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

God gave the law in order to give man a tangible reason for what was already true: sin and wrath. Paul wrote that there is no salvation through God's law at all. Instead, it makes each individual wholly accountable to God.

We read: "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified [stand righteous] in his sight, since *through the law comes knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:19-20). That's what Paul also said in today's verse. God's law reveals our inherent sinfulness. It establishes His just wrath against those who transgress His law.

Additionally, God's law reveals His holy, righteous, and good nature. Ultimately, we don't sin against a certain law but against the person who gave us His law, our perfectly holy creator to whom we are fully accountable as His creatures.

As such, "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement" (Hebrews 9:27). There's no hope through God's law but only through His promise. His law depicts our utter need for His salvation.

The Need

Falling Short

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

Today is the last day of *The Need*. The gift of Jesus is not just about a better life on this earth—it is infinitely better to follow Jesus than to follow Satan—it is about your eternal glory or your eternal doom, which already started the day you were born.

As we read yesterday, God gave us His law so that we would know the reality of sin that's in our hearts: "Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet'" (Romans 7:7). The not-knowing-sin was not a statement that sin wasn't fully present in each heart. It was and it is. It just didn't have a proper name.

When we look at God's Ten Commandments, we can be certain that we have often deliberately transgressed against them. Jesus even showed that God's commandments are not only about "the letter of the law" but also about "the spirit of the law."

For example, referring to the seventh commandment, He said: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). The apostle John wrote: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). It's not just the action; it is also the desire and intention.

It doesn't require much self-examination to say the same as what Paul wrote: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To fall short of "the glory of God" means that we don't deserve the eternal enjoyment of God's beauty and excellence. Rather, we deserve eternal separation from Him.

Each sin, including all your heart's desires and intentions, requires a just penalty. In the previous chapter, Paul wrote that you are, by nature, "storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:5). That is a continuous truth because you continuously sin. That's why Jesus is *God's Inexpressible*

Gift to You, as you will see in the next ten days.

The Gift

God's Promise

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

When Adam and Eve sinned, they aligned themselves with Satan in his rebellion against God. As such, they submitted to him as “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), even though he is only a created being. That submission has some similarities to Anakin Skywalker, submitting himself to the Sith Lord, Darth Sidious. Adam and Eve became part of “the domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13).

Was it not for God's gracious promise, He could've easily left them to themselves, just as He had left Satan to himself. He didn't! Even before He pronounced His judgement on them—also emphasizing the clear warning He had given them—God gave them a glorious, victorious promise. One of “her offspring” would deliver them from “the domain of darkness” and transfer them to “the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). The word *redemption* refers to the payment of a ransom, purchasing a slave from sin and death.

While this first gospel promise—the word gospel means *good news*—may be somewhat crypted, God promised that someone would come from Eve, “her offspring,” who would fatally bruise Satan's head. He promised a savior who would come and “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

The promise also indicated that such a divine victory would come through suffering: “And you shall bruise his heel.” This victory was forever won when Jesus died on the cross for sinners. Through His death, God cancelled “the record of debt [the debt of our sins] that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:14-15).

Since every sin demands an eternal separation from God, Jesus had to die for sin in order to save us. He had to pay the ransom—through His righteous life and sacrificial

death—in order to free us from God’s just wrath against our sins, by suffering His wrath on our behalf. Since Jesus had never sinned, death could not hold Him, rising from the grave on the third day. To reject Jesus is to reject God’s only way of salvation.

The Gift

God's Promise (2)

The gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1:1-4

God's promise to Adam and Eve, the promise of "her offspring," has been mankind's only hope for the salvation from sin and death. Ever since, mankind has been sharply divided between those who embraced God's promise by faith, and those who continued to follow "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Those who embraced God's promise—even before Jesus was born—were saved from their sins and an eternal separation from God on the basis of Jesus' promised victory over sin and death, on the basis of Him paying for all their sins through His substitutionary death. Those who rejected God's promise continued in their rebellion against God and are currently experiencing the just payment for their sins.

The Old Testament—the history from Adam and Eve till the birth of Jesus—is the story of God's promise. In order to fulfill His promise of "her offspring," God chose Abraham and his physical lineage through whom Jesus would come. God made it clear to Abraham, though, that the promised deliverer would be a blessing to "all the families [nations] of the earth" (Genesis 12:3).

Throughout the Old Testament, God would continually reiterate His first gospel promise, the one He had made to Adam and Eve. Additionally, He would give much greater detail about His promised Son, for the promised offspring would not only be born as the Son of Man; He is also the eternal Son of God, who has no beginning.

Later on, God specifically chose king David, who was part of Abraham's lineage, as the royal line through whom Jesus would be born as the eternal King, conquering Satan, sin, and death by freely giving His life for His people—for everyone who has embraced

Him by faith.

Jesus is unique. He is “descended from David” and is the Son of Man. Through His resurrection from the death, which is the conclusive evidence that He fully conquered sin and death, He was “declared to be the Son of God in power.” Only Jesus can save you from God’s just wrath against your sins.

The Gift

Jesus as Our Seed

One act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men . . . by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:18-19

The most important question in your life is not *what* you know or even *who* you know, but to *whom* you belong. On the fifth day of *The Need*, we looked at these two verses in Romans but only addressed one part of it. Today, we have the second part of these two verses.

Here are they in their entirety: "Therefore, as one trespass [by Adam] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness [by Jesus] leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience [Jesus] the many will be made righteous."

By nature, we belong to Adam—we stem from him. He is our seed, so to speak. Through his "one trespass," the whole tree was diseased with the poison of sin running through every tree limb, whether great or small. There was (and is!) no remedy from this deceased tree, except to cut it down and throw it in the fire.

God's Inexpressible Gift to You is the fact that He has given another seed to whom you can belong. That seed is perfectly holy and righteous and good. When Jesus walked on this earth, He never sinned. Paul wrote that He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The author of Hebrews wrote that He is "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:25).

Anyone's salvation is wholly based on belonging to Jesus, who never sinned and is the only one who has the Father's infinite love and favor. When we belong to Jesus—when we are "in Him," just like a tree stems from being "in" the seed—we also have the Father's infinite love and favor throughout endless ages. That is what salvation is all about.

That's why Jesus said to a religious leader: "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7). Even this religious leader was, by nature, part of the deceased tree, just like everyone else, and had to receive new (spiritual) life. The same is

true for you. All supposed morality and religiosity are utterly inadequate to save from sin and an eternal separation from God. Only Jesus can do so!

The Gift

Jesus as Our Seed (2)

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:18-19

The Bible refers to Adam as “the first man” and to Jesus as “the second man.” It also refers to Jesus as “the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47-48), indicating His divinity and humanity. By nature, we belong to Adam. Through spiritual birth, we belong to Jesus.

Adam's “one trespass led to condemnation for all men,” for all who stem from him. By nature, you are fully condemned. Your only hope is in the one who has performed “one act of righteousness.” What is this “one act of righteousness”? *Nothing* is more important than Jesus' righteous life.

When He started His ministry, He said that He came “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus lived a perfect righteous life. He perfectly obeyed the Father with all His thoughts, emotions, motives, words, and deeds. That was one major aspect of Him fulfilling *all* righteousness.

The second major aspect is His death on the cross, suffering the just penalty for sin. God will never excuse or minimize sin. He will never ignore or overlook any sin, no matter how “small.” Every sin will have its just retribution. That's why the gift of Jesus is *God's Inexpressible Gift to You*—a gift of pure grace.

In His great love, God gave Jesus and “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). When you reject God's sin-bearer, though, you will have to eternally suffer for each of your sins. On the other hand, when you embrace God's sin-bearer by faith, you will *never* have to suffer for any of your sins. Instead, you will eternally experience “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

Through Adam's disobedience “the many were made sinners.” Through Jesus'

obedience, “the many will be made righteous,” referring to all stem from Him. This “will be made” is a lifelong process that will be finalized when we leave this earth. Nevertheless, everything that stems from Jesus, even if the fruit is still imperfect and incomplete—in the process of growth—the Father will fully accept it because it stems from His Son, which is in sharp contrast to everything that stems from Adam.

The Gift

Bearing Our Sins

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:24-25

Everyone belongs either to Adam or to Jesus. There is no alternative. To whom do you belong? God's great love is demonstrated in the gift of His Son: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God's love should (and can) never be seen apart from the gift of His Son. All of God's love to sinners is in His Son. When you belong to Jesus, you are the eternal recipient of God's everlasting and infinite love (to His Son).

Today, we see in what manner the Father expressed His love to sinners. By the way, such divine love can never find its reason in a sinner—in you—but only in God Himself. As such, God's love is entirely unconditional—you don't have to meet any condition in order to enjoy His love forevermore.

Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the tree." The greatest (and only) dilemma that you face in your life is your relation to God. Is it a relation of acceptance or rejection by Him? All other dilemmas are as nothing compared to this one.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, God has provided the only way for salvation—the only way for us to be delivered from "the domain of darkness" and be transferred to "the kingdom of his beloved Son, *in whom* we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13).

His death on the cross is the only way through which we can be delivered from our belonging to Adam and, instead, belong to Jesus. God had to deal with all of our sins in a righteous manner—by Jesus suffering for them—before we can be saved from our just condemnation.

It is through his wounds that we can be healed, which is the healing from our "straying

like sheep” to returning to “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” It is the healing from a life that’s dominated by sin to a life that, slowly but surely, practices what is right. Thankfully, every believer has the assurance that God “who began a good work in you will bring it to completion” (Philippians 1:6). Salvation is His gracious work.

The Gift

Jesus Gave Himself

Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:4-5

The more serious your disease, the more prone you are to seek the proper and much-needed medical attention, including surgery if necessary. No one has ever walked into an emergency room, or sought any kind of immediate medical care, without a definite need for it. The same is true regarding the assessment of your spiritual health. When you believe you're fine, even though that's not the case, why would you pursue a savior?

At the core of sin, there is a powerful deception, including believing you're fine and not in need of Jesus. Furthermore, if the whole world was limping with their right leg, it would seem a "normal," acceptable, and inevitable condition of the human race. There is, however, nothing "normal" about sin.

The Bible describes the time in which we live as "the present evil age." John wrote that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:20). By nature, we follow "the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). We are one of "the sons of disobedience," deserving God's just wrath.

Jesus gave Himself for our sins in order "to deliver us from the present evil age." He gave Himself in order to deliver us from our inherent allegiance to "the prince of the power of the air." Through His death on the cross, He broke that allegiance that was continued through our sins.

His death is described as a ransom, paying the price for our sins by suffering for them. As a result, we can be delivered from "the domain of darkness" and be transferred into "the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

You are not an independent creature. You are either part of "the domain of darkness" or "the kingdom of his beloved Son." Your allegiance is either to "the prince of the power

of the air" or to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

God's Inexpressible Gift to You is the eternal deliverance from Satan's dominion over you to the eternal enjoyment of God and His glory. Jesus gave Himself for that deliverance by way of unimaginable suffering and a horrendous death. Will you embrace Him by faith and experience such a salvation?

The Gift

Our Justification

Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Romans 4:15

The oldest book in the Bible, Job, gives us the most important question in the universe: “How can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2). How can we be accepted by Him? Since God is perfectly holy, He cannot and will not accept anything that isn’t perfectly righteous. You and I don’t have a perfect righteousness. Instead, we are filled with sinful thoughts, emotions, intentions, words, and actions.

Our only hope is in Jesus. The Father delivered Him up for “our trespasses” and raised Him up for “our justification.” The word justification means that God declares us as perfectly righteous, even though we don’t have any righteousness of ourselves. That is what God’s good news—the gospel—is all about.

Within the Christian faith, there are certain essential truths that make up the Christian faith. If one of those truths were eliminated, it wouldn’t be the Christian faith any longer. For example, the virgin birth is essential.

This means that Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit. The angel said to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The significance is the fact that Jesus is truly God and truly man, unstained from man’s inherent sinful nature. As such, He alone could atone for sin, being without sin Himself. If Jesus had only sinned once, He could’ve never been able to save us from our sins.

Another essential truth is His resurrection from the dead, which we celebrate at Easter. If Jesus had only sinned once, there could’ve been no resurrection for Him because sin results in death. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead proves that He is the sinless Son of God. It also proves that He conclusively dealt with our sins, paying the full price for them. Peter wrote that, “He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

When we embrace Jesus by faith, the Father declares us as perfectly righteous, not because of anything we have done, but wholly based on what Jesus has done. That’s the

meaning of being saved by God's grace.

When we receive Jesus by faith, we receive His righteous life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection as a free gift. God will then credit His perfect righteous life as ours. As such, we can approach God as our heavenly Father and enjoy His love forevermore, having been adopted into His family through Jesus.

The Gift

A New Creation

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Jesus said to a highly respected religious leader: “You must be born again” (John 3:7), which means to be born “from above.” Unless you are born again, you will continue to belong to Adam and his “one trespass,” which “led to condemnation for all men” (Romans 5:18). By nature, we are “in Adam.” Through spiritual birth, we are “in Christ.”

When Nicodemus asked Jesus how one could be born again, Jesus referred to an Old Testament story. The Israelites had greatly sinned. As a result, God “sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.”

The people turned to Moses and asked him to pray for them, which he did. God instructed Moses to “make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” (Numbers 21:4-9).

In referring to this story, confirming its credibility, Jesus said: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up [a reference to His death on the cross], that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-16).

God’s love to you is expressed through the death of His Son on the cross. Paul wrote: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified [declared righteous] by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8-10).

When we look to the cross—when we believe in Jesus and His great work of

salvation—we are “a new creation.” Instead of being “in Adam,” we are then “in Christ.” As a result, “the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.”

The Gift

In Christ Jesus

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

Salvation is the eternal transfer from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ Jesus." It's from belonging to Adam and his "one trespass," which "led to condemnation for all men," to belonging to Jesus and his "one act of righteousness," which "leads to justification and life for all men" (Romans 5:18).

Through spiritual birth, which is wholly based on Jesus' righteous life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, we become a new creation. Instead of belonging to Adam as our (sinful) seed, we now belong to Jesus as our (righteous) seed.

The prophet Jeremiah had foretold that Jesus would become the source of all our righteous standing before God *and* all our righteous living toward Him: "And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness'" (Jeremiah 23:6).

Jesus has become all our righteousness, through whom we can approach the Father and enjoy His eternal favor. He said: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). There is not one shred of supposed human goodness that can be the means of approaching the Father. It's only through the one who is perfectly good, Jesus.

When you think about His perfect righteous life as a gift to you, it includes *everything* that He is entitled to—all the Father's favor, blessings, and promises. Paul wrote: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32). "In Adam," we only have God's just condemnation. "In Christ Jesus," we have justification, (eternal) life, and "all things."

Today's verses talk about how Jesus is the expression of God's wisdom. It is God's way to save those who deserve nothing but His wrath. Instead, He gives them "all things," which includes every blessing and promise. There is nothing good that the Father will withhold from those who are "in Christ Jesus."

God's wisdom is the fact that Jesus has become our righteousness (our perfect standing before God), our sanctification (our growing conformity to Him, slowly but surely), and our redemption (our perfect conformity to Him when we enter glory). That is the Christian's comfort, hope, and joy, even amidst a fallen world that drifts away from God.

The Gift

By His Grace as a Gift

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 3:23-25

On the last day of *The Need*, we looked at the first part of these verses: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” While I placed a period at the end of that verse, there is a comma. Our sins and our falling short of God’s glory—having no entitlement to the eternal enjoyment of God—is not a dead-end. There is more to the story as the comma indicates.

Because of Jesus, God declares us as perfectly righteous “by his grace as a gift.” Later on, Paul mentioned about receiving “the free gift of righteousness” (Romans 5:17). You don’t deserve it and you cannot earn it. The only thing that you must do is to take God at His word.

John expressed that with these words: “Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.”

What is God’s testimony? “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:10-12). Paul expressed the same: “The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

As you may recall, the word *redemption* refers to the payment of a ransom. Through His life and death, Jesus paid for all our sins *and* for all our righteous living. When we are “in Christ Jesus,” we have the Father’s infinite favor, which includes all His blessings and promises, *for the sake of His Son*.

The Father has put Jesus forward as “a propitiation by his blood.” The word *propitiation* means the averting of God’s just wrath. Instead of directing His wrath toward us, He directed it to His Son, who bore our sins. The only way to receive such

inexpressible grace is to receive God's testimony "by faith," which we will consider in the last section of this book.

The Response

Come!

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Isaiah 55:1-2

When it comes to God's love, fully expressed through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, there are only two responses: to accept or reject. Each response has temporal and eternal consequences. As we read in these two verses, one can never charge God with a lack of concern, persistency, and urgency when it comes to your temporal and eternal well-being.

In the *Introduction*, I wrote: "The Bible also uses 'loud' language. For example, we read: "For whoever finds me [Jesus] finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:35-36).

Jesus said: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matthew 16:26). What is the value of your soul? Or, how much do *you* value your own soul?

God invites *everyone* who is thirsty. The Bible often uses figurative language in order to communicate profound spiritual realities. Man's physical necessities are used as an illustration of his greatest desire in life—to be deeply satisfied. Man's most basic pursuit in life is to experience satisfaction? While that may be pursued in a trillion different ways, each way has the same driving force—to want to be deeply satisfied.

That's why the Bible calls sin "deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). The word *sin* literally means "to miss the goal." You've been created to find your full satisfaction in God. Obviously, an infinite ocean is more than able to satisfy a small cup. God wouldn't be God if He is not able to profoundly satisfy your heart, even in such a way that everything else in this world is as *nothing* compared with Him.

Sin deceives you into thinking that you can find genuine satisfaction in anyone or anything else but God. He simply calls you to come to Him, removing all possible obstacles and objections. It is entirely “without money and without price.” Just listen diligently to Him about the good news about His Son.

The Response

Come! (2)

**The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.”
And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life
without price.**

Revelation 22:17

This is almost the last verse in God’s word. There are only four more verses left before John ends the Bible with *Amen*. Just like through the prophet Isaiah, God makes a clear, genuine call to you—come. Once again, He uses man’s most basic physical need—water.

In doing so, He addresses your most basic spiritual need—the genuine satisfaction of your heart. Perhaps you have heard of this saying: God created man with a void that only He can fill. The deceitfulness of sin portrays anyone or anything else as a fake substitute that, sooner or later, will prove to be completely false.

As such, throughout the Bible, a life within God’s presence—a life with God, experiencing His steadfast love—is expressed in terms of profound satisfaction. For example, Moses prayed: “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:14).

The opposite is also true. A life without God is described as the quest for vanity, for that which is without true meaning and value. Solomon referred to that as “a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14). There is no authentic, genuine, real substance to it.

Wouldn’t it be deeply tragic if you were to find out at the end of your life that all your pursuing and striving were for absolute vanity, for that which has no inherent meaning or value? Don’t get me wrong. All the good things in life have meaning and value as they are seen and experienced in relation to God. When you take God out of the equation, there is no genuine substance left, only emptiness.

Sin is the horrendous reality that deserves God’s just retribution because, at the core, sin is a willful rejection of God. Adam and Eve’s rejection of God’s word—their rejection of God—was motivated by a desire to find greater satisfaction apart from Him. That desire proved to be a deceptive and destructive reality.

Today, God calls you to come to Him and “take the water of life without price.” He calls you to come to Him and find your temporal and eternal satisfaction in Him. It is entirely free!

The Response

Come! (3)

Whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

John 6:37

In the fourth chapter of the gospel of John, there is a story about Jesus and “a woman from Samaria.” The Samaritans were a mixed race and despised by most Jews. Not only that, in that culture it wasn’t the norm for a man to publicly converse with a woman, let alone with a hated Samaritan. Yet, Jesus did so. Why? God’s free gift—the gift of His Son—is for everyone. There are no exceptions.

During their conversation, after Jesus had asked her to draw some water from the well, He said: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have giving you living water” (John 4:10).

In using regular water as an illustration, Jesus also said: “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14). Obviously, Jesus referred to the all-sufficient satisfaction of our hearts, even throughout endless ages.

As their conversation continued, Jesus knowing that she has had five husbands, “and the one you now have is not your husband” (John 4:18), He addressed her most basic need for satisfaction, which she had try to fill with husband after husband.

God has made you with a void that only He can genuinely satisfy. As such, heaven is characterized by abundance and satisfaction (in God’s presence), while hell is characterized by emptiness and disillusion (away from God’s presence).

Whoever you are or whatever you have done, this invitation is true till your last breath: “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Revelation 22:17). But why wait?

Jesus also said: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in

me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive" (John 7:37-39). It is God alone who can truly satisfy your heart. Will you believe and come to Jesus? He said: "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

The Response

Come! (4)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Life can be full of burdens, whether self-inflicted or those who are “just” part of living in a fallen world. Often, the burdens of life can become unbearable, especially if there doesn’t seem to be an end in sight. While some may arrogantly boast that they are strong and powerful, despising the weak, everyone has a breaking point, when life is more than you can handle.

The psalmist wrote that God knows our frailty: “For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13). Throughout the Bible, God is not portrayed as a hard taskmaster, but as a shepherd who genuinely cares, especially for the sheep that have gone astray.

Jesus told this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” He concluded that story with: “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents [turns to Jesus] than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:3-7).

Today, we have one of His most famous invitations. It is extended to “all who labor and are heavy laden.” For an awakened conscience, the burden of sin is, by far, the greatest burden that anyone can bear. Jesus invites you to come to Him and find rest for your soul. He is “gentle and lowly in heart.”

His gentleness and lowliness of heart is seen in Him leaving heaven’s glory for an old rugged cross, “the emblem of suffering and shame” (from *The Old Rugged Cross*). There is not one obstacle or objection that can withstand His invitation to you. It is as free and as full as free and full can be.

The main question: will you come to Him and find rest for your soul? Will you take His yoke upon you, submitting to His guidance and help for the rest of your life? His nearness and strength will make all the difference, not just now but forevermore.

The Response

Believe in Jesus

Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Acts 16:30-31

The author of Hebrews wrote: “And without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). That means that the only way to please God is through faith in who He is and what He has declared in His word, especially in relation to the good news about His Son. The opposite is also true. When there is no faith, God has stated: “My soul has no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

The main (and only) issue for God is His promise of Jesus (and the eternal reality of that promise), *and* your faith in Jesus (and the eternal reality of what He has accomplished and obtained through His life, death, and resurrection).

The most respected moralist or religious person will be utterly rejected unless he has faith in Jesus. He is the only way to the Father: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

In today’s verses, the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Their answer was plain and simple: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

What is faith, though? The author of Hebrews gave us the biblical definition of faith: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Genuine faith is much more than just knowing (and believing) facts about Jesus. One can know all the parts of a car and how they work together in starting the car. Unless one goes inside the car, turns the key in the ignition, puts it in drive, and steps on the accelerator, one isn’t going anywhere. Biblical faith is a genuine trust, evidenced by coming to Jesus and embracing Him for who He is, including for what He has accomplished, obtained, and promised to do. It is to bank all one’s hope on Him.

Eve demonstrated her faith in the serpent’s lie by eating the fruit of “the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 3:6). Saving faith evidences itself by taking Jesus for who He is and what He has done: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Faith is a continual coming to Jesus in order to find your satisfaction in Him. This includes taking His words to heart.

The Response

Fearing the Word of the Lord

Then whoever feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the Lord left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

Exodus 9:20-21

God had plainly foretold the seventh plague on Egypt. He had said: “Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.”

Not only had He foretold the plague with unmistakable words, He had also stated the only possible way of escape: “Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them” (Exodus 9:18-19).

Throughout the Bible, we see the same. God will, sooner or later, judge those who rebel against Him. However, He clearly forewarns them *and* also declares the only way of salvation. As such, there are only two possible responses with it comes to God’s pronounced judgment—to believe him or to pay no attention to Him.

There were those who “feared the word of the Lord” and took proper action. The others “did not pay attention to the word of the Lord.” Faith in Jesus is not just believing certain truths about Him. It is also a *responding* to those truths. These Egyptians believed God’s coming judgment *and* took the right action.

The same is true in your case. God has clearly foretold that those who rebel against Him “will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Yet, He has also given you a way of escape through His Son: “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Will you flee to Jesus for refuge from the coming judgment?

In Proverbs, we have a sobering warning for those who “did not pay attention to the word of the Lord.” We read: “Because I have called and you refused to listen, have

stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you” (Proverbs 1:24-27).

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 3:18

God uses tender words in order to call people to come to Him. For example, in Isaiah we read: “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). He doesn’t require much but a sincere confession of sin: “Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God . . . and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 3:13).

The author of Proverbs wrote the same: “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). That’s the meaning of repentance, whereby we confess our sins, realizing their dreadful consequences, and turn to Jesus by faith as our savior.

God wouldn’t be perfectly loving, though, if He also didn’t use strong words in order to shake you to the core of your being. If you were about to drink a soda, unaware that someone had put poison in it, it wouldn’t do you any good if your “friend,” knowing the truth, just expressed how much he loves and appreciates you. A true friend would tell you the inevitable consequences with unmistakable words.

Today’s verse follows the most famous verse in the Bible: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

When you believe in Jesus, you will not be condemned for any of your sins. Instead, you will experience “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore” in God’s glorious presence (Psalm 16:11).

When you don’t believe in Jesus, though, you are *condemned already*. You are then like

a prisoner on death row, only awaiting the day of your execution. Upon your "execution," you will be cast "into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). This will be endless.

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (2)

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 3:36

God's wrath is the most dreadful, present reality there is. Paul wrote that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." By nature, man willfully suppresses God's truth.

He also wrote that no one has an excuse for such deliberate rebellion: "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

Creation is the grand testimony of our creator. If you found a wallet with a few thousand dollars, you would make the inference that the wallet belongs to someone who has lost it, even though you don't know that person nor had ever seen him.

Every single day, every single moment, God's creation declares His name: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3). Creation continuously "speaks" of a divine creator to whom you are fully accountable.

Today, you have the same two options when it comes to God's Son: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God remains on him.*" There is no neutrality when it comes to God. He is either wholly for you—because you believe in Jesus—or He is wholly against you—because you don't believe in Jesus.

Paul wrote: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But

because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:4-5). God desires your very best. Do you also desire that?

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (3)

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

1 John 5:10-12

Whatever you may believe about Jesus, you can never accuse Him of not desiring your very best—your temporal and eternal well-being. He values your soul much more than you do yourself. He said: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

Through His righteous life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, He has demonstrated that His desire for your well-being is much more than just talk. He has made it possible for you to be fully forgiven of all your sins and have a perfect righteousness—His righteous life, freely credited to you. Thus, you will be able to enjoy God’s delightful presence and infinite favor.

The personal knowledge of such a gracious God is the essence of eternal life. Jesus defined that with these words: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

When you believe in Jesus, you will have “the testimony” within yourself. That means that God’s Holy Spirit will confirm the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ. When you don’t believe in the testimony that the Father “has borne concerning his Son,” you have made Him a liar. The ultimate question is: do you believe God or do you believe Satan? Either one will be evidenced by your life.

There is not a more important consideration than the person and work of Jesus Christ. All of creation and history (and eternity) evolve around Him. As we have read before, to find Jesus by faith is to obtain “favor from the Lord.” To reject Him is to injure yourself and to “love death” (Proverbs 8:35-36).

There is not much more that I can write in relation to your temporal and eternal well-being. While you may reject Jesus (and the message of this book), I have only sought your very best, which is Jesus Himself. To have Him is to have eternal bliss. To reject Him is to have eternal separation from God, experiencing His endless wrath against your sins. The choice is yours.

The Response

To Believe or Not to Believe (4)

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16:15-16

These were some of Jesus’ last words to His followers when He was about to ascend to His Father. The mission was clear: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” As you may recall, the word *gospel* means *good news*. It’s God’s good news about His Son, about His righteous life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, providing salvation from your sins and endless ages of glorious bliss.

There are only two responses: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Often, the first part is only emphasized—the part about believing in order to be saved. Jesus, though, also wants the second part to be emphasized—the part about not believing and being condemned. He wants you to have all the details.

In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote: “But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

He mentioned that the message of Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins was “a stumbling block to Jews.” For moral and religious people, the message of the cross is hard to accept because Jesus’ death indicts all morality and religiosity as utterly worthless in relation to one’s salvation.

The message of the cross declares that salvation is only possible through Jesus’ sacrificial death. As such, they stumble over that truth, desiring to save themselves by their own supposed morality and religiosity. How many express their “faith” by believing that they are a good person and on their way to heaven?

Then, there are those who believe that the message of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross is utter folly. They laugh and mock at it. Multitudes are in that camp. To them,

the fleeting pleasures of sin are far more important than any consideration about a creator who offers salvation.

The main question for you is: what do you believe about "Jesus Christ and him crucified"? Do you believe that your own "goodness" will save you? Do you think it is folly? Or do you believe that Jesus is God's gracious answer to those who have willfully rebelled and sinned against Him, including you?

Conclusion

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, He said: “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). These three words—sin, righteousness, and judgment—are the three words that define all truth and reality.

Thankfully, through faith in Jesus and His great work of salvation, you can be fully forgiven of your sins, receive His perfect righteous life as your eternal possession, and never have to face God’s just, unending wrath. Will you embrace Jesus by faith? You will never regret doing so!

One Question...

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About the Author

I love to write devotionals—taking a Bible verse and diving into its truth and application, especially how it relates to and testifies of Jesus.

I was born and raised in the Netherlands. Jan is the Dutch equivalent of John and is pronounced “yawn.” When I was 19, I entered the U.S. for the first time and volunteered at Times Square Church, working on the Raven Truck and at The Upper Room, reaching out to the homeless. I did that for one year.

When I returned home, I started my external undergraduate degree program with Global University (at that time known as ICI University), while working at the Salvation Army at a homeless shelter in Rotterdam. In 2001, I had the opportunity to pursue my graduate degree program on a work scholarship in Florida, where I taught at a Christian academy and a seminary for six years.

In 2007, I married Rachel and we have two children—Hannah and Isaiah. We reside in the Daytona Beach area and attend Christ Community Church. I invite you to check out my websites at www.thecauseofchrist.com or www.christ-centered-books.com

Books by the Author

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