

## Complete Bi-Dispensational Theodicy – Session 1

Why did Adam sin? Most Calvinists argue that either Adam or his situation was, in some way, morally flawed from the start, thus making God culpable and taking the argument beyond free will. No wonder guys like R.C. Sproul could not come to a conclusion; their premise was flawed from the start. As a result, they made the issue more difficult than it really is.

In my understanding, Adam was not created with an innate tendency to sin, and there was no moral flaw built into his situation. God is “off the hook” for Adam’s sin. Adam is not predisposed to sin in any way.

So then, how could he have sinned? C.S. Lewis explained it this way, “The moment you have a self at all, there is the possibility of putting yourself first – wanting to be the center – wanting to be God.” I would say it this way: Free will is how Adam could have sinned. If good and evil exist, then any creature with a free will, which is not God, can choose to do evil.

Man, with a free will, can do something which God cannot do. Man can choose to do moral evil, choose to sin, choose to commit unrighteousness. God, by virtue of who He is as God, cannot choose to do any of these.

(Just to weigh in on the “could Jesus have sinned” debate; God, in the persons of the Father and the Spirit could not sin nor be tempted to sin...

**James 1:13** 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:

...and that would also pertain to the Son prior to the time that He took on human flesh. They are by their nature, not capable of or susceptible to unrighteousness in any form.

But when Jesus took on flesh and was come into the world, it was possible for him to be tempted...

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. 15 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.

Now that He has ascended back into heaven in His glorified body, while He is very God, there are aspects of His humanity that survive the glorification transition, (like the scars) which include being “touched with the feelings of our infirmities.” So, I tend to see the Son as the eternal example of a human being with free will, with the ability to choose evil, continuing throughout eternity in perfect righteousness and rejection of evil.

We are not going to be perfect creatures (in the sense that God is by nature) in eternity and yet we will continue to have a free will in eternity without sin. **More about that later!**

It is interesting that there is only one evil for A&E. God only says for them not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That single restriction represents the only way they can rebel against God.

### **1) The Fall Profoundly Affects Everyone**

- a. A&E are our first parents – we are more connected than you might think
  - i. Explain the splendor of life in the garden
  - ii. Explain A&E were given libertarian free will
  - iii. Explain there was only 1 prohibition (TKGE)
  - iv. Explain the prospect of eternal life – they were going to live forever (tree of life)
- b. We get important things from A&E
  - i. We get the image of God from A&E
  - ii. We get our soul from A&E
    - 1. Talk a bit about the soul and its mind as opposed to the brain – after death, people still think, communicate, reason and that is not with their physical brain – this is as a man thinketh in his heart – this is the soul's brain; the mind.

With regard to the soul, it does not matter if you are Traducianist, or Special Creationist.

Traducianism: the idea that in conception, two things come together (the sperm and the egg). And when they do, those two things cease to exist and a brand new substance comes into existence (the zygote). The Traducianist believes that neither the sperm nor the egg have a soul, but when they combine in fertilization, that new product is ensouled as a natural part of the process; a process which God Himself put into place. If this is true, then we got our souls from our parents, but ultimately, we got them from Adam and Eve.

There are verses that seem to support this, but they are outside the scope of our discussion.

Special Creationism: the idea that every soul is specially created by God and comes “from above.” In this case, we indirectly got our souls from our parents and ultimately from A&E in the sense that if there were no conception, there would be no special creation of a soul. There are verses that seem to support this theological stance too.

But no matter, because the core of my theodicy can be believed by either, so do not dismiss it on the grounds that I think we get our souls from our parents as a part of the process of reproduction.

The biggest objection to this is our Western individualism. We like to think we are separate units which are not that connected to everyone else. This is the very opposite of the way Asian people think.

So, no matter which you hold to, your soul, wherever you got it, it needs to be saved!

- c. We get our consciousness from A&E (part of our soul)
- d. We are organically connected to them
- e. We get our sin nature from them
  - i. It is not a matter of fair or not, it is just the way it is
  - ii. There is no way for parents to:
    - 1. reproduce part without the whole of who they are
    - 2. to give their children life without transferring the sin nature

**The point of #1 is that we inherited our sin nature from our parents, but ultimately, from Adam and Eve.** If we are going to have life, then we get the baggage too. There is no way around it.

Romans 5:12 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:

It is not like a buffet line where you get to pick and choose. The sin nature comes with the territory of having life. Therefore, it is not a matter of fair. You will pass your sin nature down to your kids too, so how fair is that?

Because of A&E actions, the only alternative to producing children with a sin nature who are under the curse, is to have no children at all. In other word, it is all or nothing. Later in our lesson, we will discover why even a life of suffering is far better than no life at all.

## 2) Understand The effects of the fall

- a. Our nature is affected
  - i. We are, by nature, sinful, unrighteous, enemies of God and we got this from A&E thru our parents

Ephesians 2:1,3 And you *hath he quickened*, who were **dead in trespasses and sins**; ...and were **by nature the children of wrath**, even as others.

Romans 5:19 For as **by one man's disobedience many were made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

- ii. We are servants of sin, unusable by God, and subject to God's wrath thru A&E

**Romans 1:18** For **the wrath of God is revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

- b. Death is certain
  - i. Physical death for our body
  - ii. Spiritual death for our soul and spirit
- c. The fall gave birth to natural evil: the curse came upon the filling and subduing of the earth
  - i. **Labor is affected**
    - 1. Sloth/laziness
    - 2. Evil labor (curious arts) were introduced by the fallen angels
  - ii. **Childbirth is affected** (pain in childbearing is a synecdoche for the larger role of mother and wife)

OED: synecdoche

A figure of speech in which a more inclusive term is used for a less inclusive one or vice versa, as a whole for a part or a part for a whole.

For example:

**Luke 12:19** And I will **say to my soul**, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. (the *soul* represents the whole man; the part represents the whole)

**Luke 2:1** And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that **all the world** should be taxed. (*all the world* represents the part of the world under Romans dominion at that time, not the parts independent like China, Africa, etc.; the whole represents the part)

In the same way, the childbirth curse includes everything accompanying childbirth, such as:

- 1. Morning sickness
- 2. Premature/breech births
- 3. Complications of pregnancy/deliver
- 4. Infant death syndrome
- 5. Deformities/abnormalities

**End of Session One**

## Session Two

- iii. **Animal kingdom is affected** (dangerous/hunter/prey) The animal kingdom, I believe, was drastically affected by the fall. Since this theodicy deals with issues of evil and suffering, my studies in this area actually took me into the realm of animal pain and suffering which naturally led me to a couple of corollary issues; 1) the issue of animal resurrection, and 2) the issue of talking animals, especially in the ages to come. (You may notice that Eve is not alarmed at a talking serpent, nor Baalim at his donkey.) It brought me to the question as to why God created these creatures in the first place and the role they were meant to play in His original creation before the fall and their role in His future kingdom, as we know “the lion and the lamb” will be there. But, this became such a big issue that I will have to do a Bare Bones Study on it in the future in order to do it any justice at all. So, for the purposes of this study, we will just touch a little on the attendant issue of suffering in the animal world and the fact that the animal world was quite affected by man’s fall.
- iv. **The earth itself is affected** – Natural Evil Results (the synecdoche of cursing the ground does not limit the curse to agriculture.)
  - 1. Nature is no longer clean
    - a. Waters can be polluted/bacteria
    - b. Plants can be poisonous
    - c. Sanitation/preservation problems (foods can spoil)
    - d. Bugs/insects infest/destroy crops at every stage
    - e. Bacteria/infections/viruses/etc. (i.e., valley fever, mold that is in the dirt)
  - 2. Temperature extremes by location and season
  - 3. Weather patterns that produce drought/flood, hurricane/tsunami, desert/ice

**The point of #2: Natural Evil is not the result of God’s creating evil, it is the result of man’s rebellion to God’s instruction. Therefore, God cannot be held responsible for Natural Evil.**

Later we will address the question, “If God did not bring it into the world, then why does He still allow it? Why doesn’t He intervene to stop it?”

There is an oft-asked question: Why do bad things happen to good people? As we are about to see in the next point of our Theodicy, we think people are “good” when they are not. We think they deserve a pass on the bad stuff, like suffering, because they are not bad people: “good people don’t deserve to suffer.”

Notice, no one ever asks why bad things happen to bad people. Do you know why? Because we think they “deserve it” if they are truly bad. Well, the inconvenient truth is that while some people are “nice,” that does not mean they are “good.”

So, let me define my terms. “Nice” is not the same as “good.” The person who smiles at you from the receptionist’s desk is being nice. The guy who holds the door for you may be a nice guy. The person who lets you get in their lane on a crowded interstate has been nice. But those things are not enough to make them “good.”

Mark 10:18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*

I know this is Israel’s program and there is a context to the statement made by Jesus to the rich, young ruler, but my point is still valid. The words of Jesus are meant to drive home the reality of who Jesus really was by stating a fact; there is no goodness apart from God. Any “goodness” that men may have will be by the very life of God within them.

Good is more akin to godly. And we can talk about true “goodness” in a couple of ways, which we will shortly. When I talk about “good” I am not referring so much to what a person does, although it can include that. What I want us to understand is that in our natural state, given the right circumstances, everyone is capable of great evil.

So, let me say it this way. People who have not been transformed by the doctrine may be “nice,” but they are not “good.” Anyone (nice or not) can do “good” things, but that does not make them “good” people. An evil man can deeply care for his own family while mistreating others. This is not a conundrum. I will explain as we get into point three. But for now, just understand this...

**...until people: 1) trust Jesus Christ** as their all-sufficient Savior, **and 2) respond to Paul’s doctrine** in a way which allows the word to effectually work in them and produce the very life of Jesus Christ in their soul, they are not a good person. Period.

Saved and edified people are good only because they have been fundamentally transformed functionally. They truly are a new creature in Christ, not just in their standing before God, but in the practical reality of their everyday lives (and that is the two ways to understand goodness: standing and practice.)

I disagree with the theologians that say that faith in Christ alone is what makes you a good person. In your standing it does, but not in your conduct. Godliness is the answer for that and until you are godly, you are not good. Saved people commit the same sins, the same atrocities as lost people. Goodness is a sanctification issue, not a justification issue.

So, here is the bottom line on what makes a person truly “good” in the sense we are talking about: what makes a person good is the life of Christ being lived in them and through them. Christ’s life is what makes us “good.” And nothing else.

By saying all of this, I am laying the groundwork for the third point in this theodicy: we must...

### 3) Understand the depths of sin

This is more important that you might realize right at this moment. Consider this point to be so important; God’s dealings with the world in connection with evil and suffering is meant to produce an education in understanding the depths of sin of which we are capable. Did you hear me? I am telling you that there are reasons for God allowing evil and suffering in this world, and one of them has to do with a VERY important part of our education as His sons and daughters.

We need to understand 1) just **how sinful we are** and 2) just **how destructive sin is**, because we underestimate both.

- a. We tend to downplay the seriousness of sin and the horror of rebellion against God – we forget that all suffering and evil is the result of sin. One sin, eating from the wrong tree, managed to:
  - i. pass a death sentence on every person
  - ii. condemn every human to hell
  - iii. wrecking the world
  - iv. turning the animal kingdom into a kingdom of violence in a world of kill or be killed
  - v. affecting the climate of the earth to produce extremes of temperatures
  - vi. producing events of nature that can destroy cities and kill populations (earthquakes, hurricanes, viruses, etc.). AND THAT WAS JUST ONE SIN!
  - vii. And that is the way we should look at sin and its ability to strip us of everything we hold dear – including our relationship with God! I mean, what did Adam do that resulted in all the natural evil that is in the world? He ate from the wrong tree. Was it disobedience? Yes. But would most people see that as worthy to produce all that resulted from that? They would say “No.” And they would say that because they do not understand what sin really is and what it does. They think: “What Adam did was not “so bad.” It isn’t like He killed someone or blasphemed God.”

But that is my point, we do not understand:

1. what our sins really are – we do not see them as a cancer, but as benign, without effect. All human rebellion is akin to Satan’s

rebellion against God, and we drastically underestimate the horror of sin

2. what our sins produce – they produce every bit of suffering in this world, no matter if it is natural evil or moral evil. No matter what the suffering is, trace it back to its root and you will find sin as its cause
  3. the effect sin has in this world
    - a. We act like we aren't contributing to the evil in this world when we sin
    - b. It's as though after Adam sinned, everything is on him, and our sin hasn't really changed anything in the world, so we can "sin" and it really doesn't matter in its consequences, only in the sense that we disobeyed God.
  4. what our sinful actions say about us; our disobedience says:
    - a. I know better than God
    - b. I dislike God's instructions
    - c. God is short-changing me
    - d. God is unfair
    - e. I deserve better
  5. what our sins are saying about how we think about God – Jesus told the little flock, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" – Our disobedience to God demonstrates we love this world, we love sin, we love our flesh, we love the Adversary (whatever), more than God
- b. We view humans as less sinful than they really are because we don't see what is in their hearts and minds, or because we want to believe the best about them, or because we haven't witnessed their bad behavior. Take them out of a civil society and then you will see their potential as monsters.
  - c. Atrocities are committed by normal, ordinary people (This is a very important point, as this is part of the education we are supposed to be getting as we observe moral evil and suffering in the world) Define: moral evil: sin, rebellion, an action by a free moral agent
  - d. List the atrocities with a few examples
    - i. Germany in WWII murdered 6 million Jews. But did you know an equal number of Poles, Ukarnians, Russians, Gypsies and handicapped people were also killed? And we are not counting those who died in combat or in cities from bombings. It was people who informed, people who arrested, people who tortured and people who killed all these.
    - ii. Millions were arrested and forced into railcars by police and Gestapo. They were packed in so tightly, no one could sit. They traveled for days



- w/o food, water, sufficient oxygen. They urinated, defecated, vomited standing up. Thousands died. For example, in 1944, 2521 prisoners were taken from France to Dachau, where 984 died enroute. It was people who rounded them up, people who forced them into the cars, people who packed them in tightly, and people who closed the doors on them.
- iii. Thousands, often entire families were stripped naked, lined up in front of ditches and shot, all day until the dark halted the shootings.
  - iv. Gas chambers holding 2000 people at a time were killed by Zyklon-B gas. The guards said they knew when everyone was dead when the screaming stopped. The incinerated the bodies at Auschwitz at a rate of 4756 people a day.
  - v. The horror of this is that Hitler's hatred and intentions were not hidden. He wrote of gassing the Jews in both volumes of *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) in 1925 (vol. 1) and 1926 (vol. 2). Still, it was a nation of people who did Hitler's bidding in carrying out all the atrocities.
  - vi. By 1996, researchers had identified positively, 10,005 camps and when they counted the subcamps, the total went to 42,000. It was people who rounded these people up and shipped them to the camps. It was people who ran the camps. How many people do you think ran the 42,000 camps? Were they all sociopaths?
  - vii. Soviet Union: From 1917 to 1989, 26 million were killed or died in camps. It was people who did the killing and people who ran the camps where they died.
  - viii. 1932-1933 saw Soviet quelling of Ukrainian nationalism by starving to death 7 million Ukrainians. They used dogs to sniff out the food and took it all. All seeds were seized and blockades prevented importation of food. Anyone perceived as a threat to communism was killed. It was people who thought of these inventive ways of putting down the Ukraine nationalists. It was people who picked up the food, it was people who ransacked houses and businesses, it was people who raided the stores and carried off all food stuffs.
  - ix. China, Chinese communists imprisoned and killed 26-30 million. In 1958, the communists buried alive 46,000 scholars, the Chinese preferred method of execution. The average time it takes to suffocate from being buried alive is 1-2 hours. It is painful as the weight of the dirt crushes down on the chest. It is people who did this to other people.
  - x. Japan, WWII and the rape of Nanking was front-page news around the world as millions were killed in ways that I cannot talk about publicly<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the Netflix documentary, *The Rape of Nanking*, or *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, by Iris Chang (2012) Basic Books

- xi. In Rwanda, 800,000 Tutsis were killed by machete in 100 days. Rwanda, at the time, was a highly Christianized country. Imagine! This does not include people who survived, minus a hand or limb or lived to bear great scars or injuries. This is people, taking machetes and hacking other people to death at the rate of 8,000 per day. This is people hunting other people, people who are running from them, trying to escape and begging for their lives. This many people would completely wipe out the population any of the following cities, San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Oklahoma City, Nashville, El Paso, Boston, Las Vegas, Portland, Baltimore, Milwaukee or Detroit. Think how many people it would take to hack to death by machete, the entire population of any of these cities and to do it in 100 days.
- xii. 1915-1923, Turks killed 1.2 million Armenians. It was from this atrocity we coined the term “crimes against humanity.”
- xiii. 1975-1979, 2.2 million Cambodians were killed by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge (the armed communist movement) in an attempt to dissuade intellectuals and return the country to an agrarian culture.
- xiv. Guatemala, South Africa, Pakistan, Uganda, Iraq, Argentina, Romania, Spain, France, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Brazil, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Darfur.
- xv. But not us, we are civilized. We only killed 60 million babies here in the U.S.
- xvi. 1960-1963, psychologist Stanley Milgram’s Obedience study at Yale University – to understand how so many ordinary people could participate in the torture and execution of so many in the Holocaust. In response to News article, two people come to the lab – after a coin flip, one was “teacher” and the other “learner.” To impress the teacher with the significance of their actions, at the start of the experiment, the teacher received a 45-volt shock. The learner strapped to a chair in a different room. Was told to learn a list of word pairs. When the learner made a mistake, the instructor told the teacher to administer a shock in every-increasing doses from 15 – 450 volts in 15v increments. The switches were labeled “Slight Shock” to “Danger – Severe Shock” and under the 450 volt was a label with XXX. AT 150v, the learner cried out in pain and ask to be released from the study. Crying and yelling continued to the 330v level. After that, he would stop responding. In spite of screaming and begging the volts increased. Actually, the learner was a paid actor who received no shock at all. The experiment was really on the teacher, to see how many would give dangerous levels of shock on the word of the instructor. The result: 65% gave all shocks instructed including the lethal

doses, with no difference between men and women. This study shocked the psychology world.

- xvii. Others replicated the study, only with higher compliance numbers. In Munich, West Germany, 25 years after WW II, 85% administered the maximum shock.
- e. All who study genocide and survivors testify to (a) ordinary people.
- f. Show the book, Ordinary Men.<sup>2</sup>

This is a more important lesson than you realize, and it has a place in this theodicy. In the right circumstances, people will do terrible things.

**The point of #3: We are much more sinful than we realize, sin is more destructive and dangerous than we imagined, AND we are more capable of horrible behaviors than we think**

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<sup>2</sup> Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, by Christopher Browning.

### Session Three

At the very start I told you this Theodicy has 10 points to it. Let me list them for you.

- 1) The fall profoundly affects everyone
- 2) The effects of the fall
- 3) Understand the depths of sin
- 4) How Can Eternal Punishment be Fair?
- 5) Free Will – Is it Worth it?
- 6) Understand where moral evil originated
- 7) Why God allows suffering
- 8) The Judgment Seat of Christ
- 9) The glory of what is waiting for us
- 10) How we can have free will in eternity and not sin against God?

In our previous two sessions, we looked at the first three of these very important issues, issues which I hope you have spent some time considering and talking to your heavenly Father about. But I want you to think about them in ways beyond what I told you; I want you to really think about them, meditate on them, ask questions, and think about the answers. Let me give you an example.

The first issue we examined involved our connection to Adam and Eve. Look at the passage in Genesis 2 and let's ask some questions.

Genesis 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for **in the day** that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**.

What did God mean by the last phrase in vs. 17? There are 4 basic ways to look at “in the day...thou shalt surely die.” The first two ways involve understanding the phrase to mean that death was going to take place the same day they would eat of the tree.

The first way is, the same day you eat, you will die physically; your body will die. But we know that did not happen. In fact, Adam lived 930 years before he died physically. Since we know God cannot lie, we know this is not the meaning He intended Adam to understand.

The second way to look at it is that they died the same day they ate, only not physically, but spiritually. I think they did die spiritually, but I am not convinced that is the sense which God intended by the warning. When God said they were going to die, I think He was referring to the physical death of their bodies.

The third way is to run over to 2 Peter 3:8 and make a “day” a thousand years, and then show that Adam died at 930, so he did not live out the “day.” And while Adam did not outlive a

millennial “day,” I don’t think that God was telling them, “If you eat of this fruit, you will live less than a thousand years.” I’m not sure the millennial “day” concept was in force yet, seeing that there was not “time” before and this was the first week.

The fourth way to look at “in the day” is to understand it is the sense of “the day you eat of this tree, you are destined to die,” or “the day you eat of this tree, you have made your death certain,” not “you are going to die today.” This is the one I lean toward for several reasons.

Look at the word “surely” in vs. 17. God says, “thou shalt surely die.” Why add “surely?” Couldn’t God just say, “If you eat it, you will die?”

What does the word “surely” add to the warning? It adds an air of certainty. Why would God say “surely” unless there was some element that would have called His warning into question? And there was; the fact that Adam and Eve were not going to immediately drop over dead when they ate of the tree.

I do not think they were anticipating dropping dead on the spot. There was no “surprise” at still being alive. But the “surely” told them not to be fooled by the fact they were still living; their future death was certain.

Why is it important to understand what God is saying about “in the day...thou shalt surely die?” It is important because if I am right about what this phrase means, it explains why God’s warning didn’t work. And when we understand why the warning didn’t work with Adam, we can see an application in our own lives. And if we can see that the thing which caused Adam to disobey, when he knew better, is also the thing which causes us to disobey, when we know better, then we can change our disobedience to obedience.

So why didn’t God’s warning work? Because dying “one day in the future” is a different from dying on the spot. And Adam was willing to live with that one. The word “surely” was meant to remind them that even though they did not drop dead in that moment, one day they would die and that was a certainty.

And ever since then, we all do things that are wrong, harmful, or destructive, and even though we know it will have an effect on us “one day,” often, that is not enough to dissuade us from our bad actions. The question is “why?”

The answer is: our knowledge of the consequences have not sufficiently impacted us. Either we underestimate the future consequences or we are willing to suffer the consequences. To apply this to Adam, either Adam did not realize the extent of the consequences of his actions, or, he decided to disobey God anyway.

People do this all the time, in many areas of their lives. Consequences are easier to live with when we can postpone them; “I’ll worry about that when it happens.”

So, let me make the application of why we are looking at this in our Theodicy. We are about to discover another part of our education as sons and daughters. This part of our education concerns how we think about sin and its consequences. Last week I covered a long list of atrocities which are shocking and uncomfortable to hear about. But it was also surprising to learn that ordinary people engaged in the doing of them. I was trying to establish the depths of sin of which we are capable.

I started with those terrible events because it is easy for us to see the horror of those events. But what I want to do next is: 1) make the connection between sin and suffering, and 2) convince us that there is no such thing as a little rebellion against God. At the core of what they are, they just as horrible. These are two themes you will hear over and over in this theodicy and they are more important than you realize.

But getting back to A&E, think for a moment about the genius of what God did and did not do, in light of their rebellion.

- **God did not** kill Adam and Eve on the spot – although the angels may have wondered why not, because if these two reproduce, that is going to be catastrophic.
- **God did** let them live long enough to reproduce and that was actually the point. If God had just wiped A&E out and started over:
  - Would it have been any different?
  - It violates the principle of God making the old new/ reconciling things back to Himself? (You are a **new** creature in Christ, you get a **new** body, God makes a **new** heaven and earth, etc.)
- **God is not** interceding to prevent, mitigate or suspend Natural Evil or Moral Evil for anyone (even fully-educated sons and daughters) Why? (This is one of the questions of Theodicy)
- **God is** providing a critical education by allowing evil

## Session Four

Many years ago, William Lane Craig made an interesting statement, “I don’t think God could create a world without suffering unless it had an antecedent world where suffering existed.”

This is that antecedent world. In other words, by allowing the full consequences of sin, through the whole range of sufferings which people see and experience, God is doing something eternal, beneficial and necessary; **He is educating the saints on how to live throughout eternity, with our free will still intact**, (and here comes the part God was after) **without sinning!** (You may not understand that yet, but hang on, you will before we are done.)

**Romans 7:13** Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, **that it might appear sin, working death in me** by that which is good; **that sin** by the commandment **might become exceeding sinful**.

Part of the job of the Law was:

- to make sin appear as sin
- to work death in us (so sin would scare us to death)
- to make sin appear exceeding sinful

In that last phrase is what I am trying to get to in all this; we must have an education that impacts us as to just how exceeding sinful sin is, even the “little sins.”

Romans 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now **yield your members servants to righteousness** unto holiness.

We are going to discuss this later in a lot more detail (#7 & #10), but for now, just know that, in eternity, God is not interfering with our free will, or limiting our freedom, or manipulating our minds, or anything else to make sure we don’t sin again. There is no magic wand, no mind-wipe, no lobotomy. God is not going to chaperone any of us throughout eternity, so we don’t do anything we aren’t supposed to. And I have another surprise for you, once again He is not going to deal with you out of His omnipotence. Your eternity will not be one of God looking over your shoulder. (Lots more to say about that one later)

Think with me: Because people don’t like what is happening in their circumstances and suffering, their default is to blame God.

Proverbs 19:3 The **foolishness of man** perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth **against the LORD**.

Man blames God for the bad things which are actually man’s fault.

People who don't understand what God is doing by allowing suffering and evil in the world ask questions like this, "Instead of allowing suffering and evil, couldn't God have done something else, something better? Couldn't He have done things a different way?"

If you ask people what they have in mind, they will say something like the following:

"God could have stopped A&E from disobeying by walking up to them before they ate and asked them what they were doing. I call this the "dog collar" objection. You know, like the dog collar that delivers a shock if the animal breaks the boundaries.

Obviously, God knew what they were up to. Just because it was the Sabbath did not mean that God was napping and was unaware."

Of course, God knew what they were doing, He is omniscient. But God did not deal with them out of His omniscience. What I mean by that is that He was not acting out of His omniscience of their disobedience, He was actually acting in their best interest by not intervening to stop them before they sinned. God was looking way down the road and making wise decisions about people and their eternity.

What kind of life in eternity would the "dog collar" strategy give you? Would you enjoy it? Do you really think you want one of God's angels tapping you on the shoulder to say "uh-uh-uh" every time you are about to displease God? Imagine living every moment, of every day, of your entire existence, forever, being superintended in every thought and action. Is that what you want?

And here is the worst part, for a person who has not yet learned enough to stay away from those things on their own, that kind of overwatch seems to be extremely intrusive. Because it is. In fact, it is so intrusive that it violates a person's free will.

Which is exactly why God did not interrupt the rebellious act of A&E in eating the fruit. I talked about this last week at the break, but now we need it on the recording. For men in this world, God has sufficiently distanced Himself, so that He is close enough to be seen by those who, of their own free will chose to believe, and yet far enough away for others to exercise their free will to reject Him. This way, God is not violating any man's free will. It is by design.

We might wish there was a way of proving Him so that no one could dispute it, but if it did, many who would follow Him would only feign to do so. So, feel better about the fact that God isn't doing things which actually skew anyone's free will and produce a false following. (BTW, this is exactly what is being put down at the Last Great Battle; God is weeding out the millennial fakers! They are in the kingdom and they are following the rules, but they don't want to; they hate the Lord Jesus.)



Let me step aside to say that, in this Theodicy, we are going to discuss what life is going to be like in eternity for us as members of the body of Christ and it is not what you think or been taught by the standard teachings of Christianity. I would go so far as to say that much of what you will hear, you have never heard before, at least for many of you. And when I say that, I am not insulting your personal bible study. Quite the contrary, I am hoping that some of you will take what I am going to show you and build on it and expand and take it further, because once I am out of this Theodicy, the time I am going to have available to advance this study is going to be very, very limited because I already have other studies I will be concentrating on.

So, to get back to it, do you really want some ever-present referee to “blow the whistle” just before you break a rule?

Do you know what that does? It means you don’t have enough freedom to sin, but you also don’t have enough freedom to bring glory to God. Because not doing a sin which you really want to do is not enough to glorify God. See Mt. 5:27-28.

The eternal referee objection means you don’t have enough freedom to disappoint God, but you don’t have enough to please Him either.

But let’s get to the heart of the matter. Treating us like young children who cannot be trusted on our own, but must have constant correction and supervision, is exactly the opposite of what God is planning for us, and it is not the kind of life you would find attractive for very long.

People already think life on this earth is way better than whatever is waiting for them in heaven, so let’s assign them an eternal babysitter – oh, I can just see people lining up to get in on that. People just don’t realize what is waiting for them, the kind of life they will have in eternity. And a good Theodicy needs to include that.

And BTW, is that the best God can do? Is the end result of our edification insufficient to turn us loose in the creature without a governor that keeps us in check somehow? Is the life of Christ in us unable to produce a sinless eternity without God altering our minds in some way? Then what are we working toward if the whole thing cannot be realized without some divine manipulation at the end?

Romans 6:22 But now being made **free from sin**, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, **and the end everlasting life.**

I’m just going to say it for now and we will explain it later, your life in the heavenly places is going to be the greatest life imaginable, with the most freedom you have ever known. I mean it. God is not going to alter our personalities so that we are all identical. God is going to give us the freedom to live the lives we want to live, without a handbook of rules and regulations - because

we won't need one. And that is why He is doing things the way He is doing them, to make that kind of future a living reality.

Now, let's do the next objection: Why did God put the tree of knowledge there in the first place? Couldn't He have put it out of reach somewhere? Or put an angel to guard it, so they couldn't eat of it? Or, just not had the tree in the garden at all?

Same principle, different question.

To answer this one, I want to start with an analogy of how we reared our children. When children come into the family, some folks put their coffee table items up out of reach, just like this last objection says God should have done with the TKGE. After all, if they can't reach them, they can't break them or hurt themselves with them. But we did not do that. Instead, we left everything out on the tables, but we taught the kids what they could touch and what they could not touch. There will come a day when you can't keep everything out of their reach, and when it arrives, they better know how to have some self-discipline and restraint.

But again, let's cut to the heart of the issue. God put the tree in the garden to prepare us for an eternal life of freedom and liberty. You say, "How does that work?" Think about it. If God never puts the tree in the garden, if He never allows us the opportunity to disobey, how genuine is our obedience? If God "stacks the deck" so that we have free will, but we can't actually use our free will when it violates His will, are we acting out of love for God? Do we really have free will? Can we really be trusted? Are we really mature saints capable of laboring with Him?

Because if we don't have free will, then we are no longer in His image; we are nothing more than a train which can only run on tracks which limit where we can go. We are not sons and daughters with any real liberty if we cannot be trusted on our own to do the right thing. And none of that is God's plan for you.

God put the tree in the garden. If a severe warning about it would have been enough, then God's warning would have worked. But the fact that it did not proves that we needed more than a stern warning, we needed to experience something that would convince us that God was right all along, that He was acting in our best interest, that God was not keeping something good from us, that we were not being treated unfairly, because those are the things behind **every disobedient act!** That is what Natural and Moral Evil are doing (if we care to pay attention) and that is why God isn't stopping it.

Let's do one more objection: Or, "why didn't God deal with A&E before they had kids and passed down their sin nature to them? He had time, it isn't like Eve was about to deliver the day they ate the forbidden fruit."

By God allowing them to reproduce children with a sin nature, and by allowing sin to produce its full consequences of suffering, God is doing two things: 1) **For everyone:** He is providing a context which allows men to fairly and freely, of their own will, without God putting his finger on the scale, decide if they want to spend eternity with Him or without Him (more about that later), and 2) **God is teaching His saints** a lesson upon which their/our eternity rests, **how to live without sin without being forced to and without intimidation or manipulation.**

By allowing evil and suffering, God is educating us on how to freely choose righteousness and lose our longings for the pleasures of sin so that, in eternity, we will never again consider sin to be an option. And this part of our education will constitute a big part of our being conformed to the image of God's Son, which, by the way, God says is going to happen for everyone – whether it takes place here or not, is up to us individually, but it will take place (it must take place!).

Romans 8:29-30 For whom he did foreknow, **he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

God predestined every one of His sons and daughters (every member of the body of Christ) to be conformed to the image of His Son. Predestinated to be like Christ: that is our destiny! And why? Because God cannot turn even one of his sons or daughters loose in the heavenly places (or anywhere else for that matter), unless and until, they are fully conformed to the image of His Son. And BTW, that is not going to happen magically; it is part of (and for many, it will be the final part of) our education.

So, if being conformed to Christ is going to happen, you may be wondering what all the big deal is about obeying the doctrine and being conformed now, while we are still on the earth living these mortal lives. Well, as it turns out, it is a big deal if that gets done now, or later at the JSOC. (Don't worry, I have a whole section on this and our eyes are going to be opened)

This may sound far-fetched to some of you. Like me, you were probably brought up under preaching that scolded you for sin while, at the same time, telling you how impossible it will be for you to be sinless. That idea paints a particular picture in our mind which is, I believe, inaccurate. Let's look at this for a moment.

Let's say you have a decision to make. If you obey God and His word, it will be a godly action. But if you choose to disobey, it will be sin. What do you need to do in order to not sin?

Well, it is possible, at any decision-point, to make the godly choice? Well, if it possible to make the godly choice one, is it possible to make the godly choice on two decisions? How about three? Does the godly choice get harder and harder because you did the godly thing previously? Is it like weight that just keeps building up and building up until we just can't shoulder it

anymore and we choose to sin because it's just impossible to do one more godly decision? (I think it is the opposite, that godliness (in a way) begets more godliness.)

By the way, just as the mercies of God dawned on me just before we started Romans 12, it now dawns on me that this part of our education should have been initiated back in Romans 6 as we studied our Sanctification. Again, better late than never, I hope.

This is what happens when a pastor is not a fully-educated son. So, sorry about that, but I am trying to get there.

Romans 6:13 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.***

How many times are supposed to do this? I mean, what is God expecting? Do we do this once a day, or once a week? Is He asking us to do something of which we are incapable? How often is righteousness possible for us? Did Paul tell us to do this and turn around and say, but no one is expecting you to get this right every time, after all, no one is perfect? Get my point?

Romans 6:12 **Let not sin therefore reign** in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Is there something about doing the right thing that just makes it too hard to do? See, I don't believe that. I think the life of Christ in our inner man transforms us and can change the way we feel about sin. I think you do not have to wait until you get to heaven to do this, but, and we will talk about it later, it will be easier to do then. But you can learn this lesson now. There are a couple of problems that keep us from getting there. The first one is this: when preachers say that to be sinless in this life is impossible, I think they say that because the only reference that have for that statement is their flesh. And I agree completely, you will not successfully make a godly choice by means of our flesh.

But we have something more than our flesh; we have the word of God, effectually working in our inner man, to renew our minds in such a way that the life of Christ can be lived in us and through us on a moment-by-moment basis, enabling us to make godly decisions and choices at every decision point.

Romans 7:25 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.**

Romans 7:5 For **when we were in the flesh**, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

The flesh cannot serve God. The motions of sins work in us to produce functional death.

## Session 5

We left off last time in a discussion about sinless perfection. So, let's pick that back up for a moment. Firstly, the term "sinless perfection" just doesn't sit well with most of us. So, why is that?

I think for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because of things we have been taught. I have heard all my life that no one is sinlessly perfect, indeed, no one can be sinlessly perfect in this life. Yet, I have also heard that in heaven, we will not sin anymore. But what I did not hear was the "why" to those two assertions. Why can't we stop sinning here on earth, and how is it we will stop sinning when we get to heaven? We are going to talk about both of these, but before we do, I want to give you another reason we have such a hard time with sinless perfection.

The second reason we struggle with sinless perfection is because we have heard someone make that claim for themselves, when it is pretty obvious to us that they are not sinless. They seek to exalt themselves, and like Satan, they confer upon themselves a status they do not possess in reality. And when we see a false claim of perfection, it bolsters the idea that no one is perfect because we don't want to be lumped in with the fakers.

We must realize there have always been pretenders. When legitimate spiritual gifts were being given by the Spirit in the days of Paul's ministry, there were those who "faked" certain gifts so they could exalt themselves. But did the fakers make the true spiritual gifts less real? Not at all.

In the remnant church of Acts 4-5, when people were selling their possessions and giving the money for the support of the whole assembly, Ananias and Sapphira pretended to make such a sacrifice, but did their pretense mean that other people did not give sacrificially? Of course not.

The point is that we cannot allow pretenders to dissuade us of that which is genuine and true. Do not let the counterfeiters leave such a bad taste in your mouth that you fail to really look at the doctrine which is true.

Now let's return to the first reason we naturally shy away from sinless perfection; it just isn't possible for us here on the earth. And, as was said earlier, those same preachers will say that it will be more than possible in eternity, it will be a certainty. So, let's talk about this second part first. How will it be possible in eternity?

I have put forth the idea that we will maintain our free will in eternity. And if you think that there will be no sin for us in eternity because there will be no industry of sin, like producers of pornography and such, then just know that no such things existed in heaven when Lucifer rebelled either, but that did not stop him from sinning. It won't stop us either.

Some have the idea that God will somehow remove any desire to sin, but if forced compliance is the method, how genuine is our obedience? If God makes it so that you cannot sin, He has

essentially removed our free will. Even worse, this idea that God is going to, by some means override or restrict our free will in eternity, is to say that the power of His grace was insufficient to 1) produce a desire to be sinless and 2) unable to provide the power to be sinless. And I do not believe that for one minute. Think about that. What does it say that at the end of the DoGG, the power of God's grace did not produce a sufficient desire, in one single person, to be sinless – and if it did produce that desire, then it was *allegedly* unable to provide the power to do so.

By saying that God has to perform some little trick at the end (once this life is over and we are about to enter the heavenly places) to make us sinless, is to say that the life of Christ in us was not capable – or was not sufficiently available – to keep us from sin in this life, and our conformity to Christ in this life has insufficient power to convince us to righteousness in the ages to come. The only alternative to this is to say that, yes, it is our conformity to Christ that will make us sinless in the ages to come, but either: 1) the conformity that takes place during this life is incapable of producing an eternal effect, or 2) God must complete our conformity to Christ as if by magic, apart from any real process.

I believe there is a very real process whereby we are conformed to the image of God's Son. No, I do not think it works like a light switch where we just flip the switch, and we are suddenly sinless. Because that is a process of edification, it is linked with the effectual working of God's word in our inner man and that means it takes time and it must be done on purpose.

So what is the process? If we just say "edification" that doesn't quite home in on the details enough for us to comprehend. So, here is the process: By God allowing evil and suffering in this world, He is educating us about what sin produces; convincing us of its heinous nature and horrible consequences. Through our own experience of suffering, and as we observe the sufferings of others, God means for us to be convinced of the seriousness of sin to the extent that we abhor sin, all sin, like He does, and therefore, we will freely choose to refuse sin when we are tempted.

This is a theodicy, and as such, I have just given you the reason why God, who is perfectly good and omnipotent, is allowing evil and suffering in this world; it is for the purpose of allowing us to continue to have free will in eternity, without the evil and suffering that sin causes.

The problem is, we know some things about sin and the consequences of sin, but they have not sufficiently impacted us. Why? 1) Because we have not thought about evil and suffering this way before, but now that you know this is part of your education, you can be impacted to see sin the way God does and refrain from it - which is the whole reason He made us dead to sin and alive unto God for this time on earth, so we *could* refrain from it, to make it possible for us to refrain from sin, and 2) Because we don't really believe some sins are that bad and we think that people are basically good. As a result, we don't see sin like God does, and we keep sinning. And we find comfort in saying, "nobody is perfect." When we think "nobody is perfect" we should stop and realize what we are saying, we are saying that it is not our fault, we are saying

that all God has done to keep us from sin is not enough, we are saying that what everyone else is doing, that is the standard for us to live by.

When someone says “nobody is perfect” we should stop and ask ourselves “Why?” I mean, let’s suppose nobody is sinlessly perfect, then why is that true? To answer that question, we must first answer another question: “Can we ever say “no” to the temptation to sin? Is it possible for us to choose righteousness instead?”

Can we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness? Is Romans 6:13 possible for us to do, even one time? Can we say “no” to sin even once; is that possible? You know it is because we have all done it. Well, if it is possible to say “no” to sin once, why can’t we do it twice? Can we? Can we do it twice? I know we can say “no” to sin twice in a row because I have done that.

And if we can do it twice, why can’t we do it three times? If we can do it twice, I think we can do it three times. And if we can do it three times why can’t we do it all day? Is it possible to say “no” to sin all day? I think it is. And if we can do it all day today, why can’t we do it all day tomorrow?

So, the answer to the question, “If it is possible to say “no” to sin every time we are tempted, then why aren’t we sinlessly perfect?” I think there are a couple of answers to that question.

The first answer is: **because we choose not to be.** It is not a question of ability, it is a question of desire. And those things are an aspect of grace, as grace (in one definition) is the desire and the power to do the will of God.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. **But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:**

The second answer to why people are not perfect is because they are attempting to accomplish perfection by the efforts of their flesh. And because that is the only way most people know how to live for God, they keep failing. The whole point of the law was to demonstrate that you can’t do this in and of yourself. God has to provide something for us (something which we cannot generate ourselves) and then we must live out of His provision.

And what has He provided? Well, firstly, He provided a status in Christ that actually makes living sinlessly possible; He made us dead to sin and alive unto God. We are set free from sins mastery and now, in our sanctified status in Christ, we can actually produce a righteousness that matches God’s righteousness. How can that be? Our righteousness can match His because it *is* His righteousness! It is Him in us – folks, that is the mystery of godliness; God in the man, doing what man alone could never do. Are you telling me that “God in us” cannot teach us to see sin for what it is, and choose to refuse it? I don’t believe that.

What else has He provided other than our status in Christ? He has provided a process whereby we are edified unto godliness as a practical reality. He does this by means of: 1) His word (which is meant to effectually work in us), 2) His Spirit (which He gave us when we trusted Christ) and the resurrection life of His Son (which is the means of our “walking in newness of life” not us “turning over a new leaf”).

Well, it seems ludicrous to me that God would do all that He has done for us in Christ, and then provide a means for us to be conformed to His image as a practical reality if all we can do is refuse sin sometimes. According to that idea, evidently, we are just going to have to wait until God waves His magic wand at us and we all become sinless after we get to heaven. I am being sarcastic. And I’m telling you, that is not how it works.

Okay, that is all I am going to say about this issue. You can take it or leave it, but for me, I have grown quite dissatisfied with the “company line” on our ability to be sinless. And by the way, if you feel like that is happening for you, in the current climate, it would probably be best not to claim sinless perfection for yourself. Firstly, it isn’t very humble, it sounds like you are bragging. And to folks who aren’t there yet, it sounds like you are saying you are better than they are, which makes you look proud. So, just keep working on yourself and keep quiet about it.

And do not go around asking other people if they are sinlessly perfect. That is like asking them where they are in the education; you have nothing to gain from their answer, that is their business and not yours, so keep those kinds of questions to yourself.

If someone does ask you, what would be a good answer? **I rejoice in every opportunity to refuse sin by putting God’s righteousness on display and hope to continue to do so.**

As you continue to think about this issue, consider the following verses. When I used to look at these, I thought about “perfect” not in relation to sin, but in relation to maturity, to completion. But then I looked at some verses and Paul does not think maturity and completion are the same thing. So, I thought this is just about maturity. But wouldn’t maturity include our attitude toward sin? I mean, how mature can be if you just keep giving in to lust, or envy, or anger, or jealousy, or strife, or hatred, or lying, or wrath, or heresies, or disobedience to God?

Can we really compartmentalize sin away from our maturity in Christ? So, how much sin can we commit and still be “a perfect man?” Don’t you think that our eschewence (disdain/avoidance) of sin is part of being a “perfect man?” For a son or daughter, part of their perfection is to view sin like God does and respond to it according to knowledge (godly knowledge).

Just look at each of the following and think about what comes to your mind when Paul mentions being perfect.



Philippians 3:14-16 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, **as many as be perfect**, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. **Be perfect**, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

In what way is Paul asking them to be perfect, just in knowing the scriptures in an advanced (mature) way, or in the ability to live according to scriptures in an advanced way (which would include the “sin” issue)?

Galatians 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now **made perfect** by the flesh?

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Does the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” include choosing righteousness instead of sin when we are tempted or is that pertaining to some knowledge we have?

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may **present every man perfect** in Christ Jesus:

If I am right about the word “perfect” including the idea of abhorring sin and evil and cleaving to righteousness and good, then this verse is telling us exactly what I have been saying; that this education of suffering and evil is supposed to convince us of the foolishness of sin so we can live in eternity without sin.

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, **that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.**

Here is where we see that “perfect” and “complete” are two different issues. Do you think Epaphras was praying for them to be perfectly knowledgeable in the doctrine, but not in whether they choose to sin or obey God?

Look, this education about sin is just one piece of the answer of how we can choose to avoid sin in eternity even though we will have a free will. But it is the one we can work on here and now, in this life. In topic #8 of this Theodicy, I am going to give you 8 reasons sin will no longer be an issue. Seven of them cannot be realized until after our life on earth is over. But one of them, this one, can certainly be done right now, and it is important to work on it now.

## Session Six

Now, I want to finish the notes we didn't get to last time.

Understanding the depths of sin and what sin means to God, serves a great benefit to us.

### Understanding the depths and horror of sin:

**1. *shows us the problem of evil is not with God, it is with people***

*It is people who do evil. The question is not "Why does God allow evil" but it should be "Why does God allow humans?"*

**2. *drives us to the doctrine***

*The suffering of others should make us think of sin as the culprit. Our own suffering is the result of sin. It may be Adam's sin (Natural Evil) or it may be someone else's sin, (Moral Evil) but every suffering can be traced back to sin. And that knowledge should drive us to the doctrine. It should produce a hatred for sin because we see what it is producing in the world. When we understand what sin is to God, we will abhor it, just like He does.*

**3. *demonstrates there is no little rebellion against God***

*We underestimate how bad sin is. Little rebellion reveals that we will choose when to obey God, as though it must our kingdom, not His. Evil is born when a creature decides it knows better than the Creator. This lesson is so much more important than most people think. Until we are convinced of the truth of this point, we are not ready for the ages to come.*

*For those I am talking to today, I know our sins this week will not be those of the type we talked about last Sunday. We are not planning to kill anyone or commit crimes against them. And in the normal course of events, our transgressions will not be as great as we described last week. In the human comparative, talking bad about someone is not as bad as killing them. Granted.*

*But take it out of the human comparative, and think about the act itself as it pertains to God. All rebellion is sinful to God and God hates all sin. The degree is not the issue, the rebellion is the issue.*

**Romans 6:13 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.**

Is God asking us to do something impossible here?

1 John 5:17 **All unrighteousness is sin:** and there is a sin not unto death.

I am making the point that if our thinking is unrighteous, it is sinful thinking. If our actions are unrighteous, they are sin. If our motives are unrighteous, our motives are sinful. I say this because these are the areas that will be the most sinful for most of us. We won't be committing atrocities, humanly speaking, we will be committing unrighteousness, and all unrighteousness is sin.

Let me use myself as an illustration because the sins I will be tempted to commit are the same ones you will be tempted to commit. I am not thinking of robbing anyone or doing them harm and neither are you. My transgressions will be in my choices to either obey my heavenly Father by being godly (making godly decisions in how I think, what I do, the words I say, etc.) or to give in to my flesh and disobey what I know to be His will for me. In other words, to be unrighteous.

Just to illustrate the point, let's take the following doctrines:

**Romans 12:8** Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; **he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.**

If I show mercy to a fellow member, but I do so begrudging, when I become aware of my wrong attitude, I have a decision to make: I can go to work on that with my Father, or I can say "No, I'm not going to work on that."

**Romans 12:10** *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **in honour preferring one another;**

We know what it means to "in honor prefer one another," but suppose we feel jealous, after all, I should be getting some honor from my fellow members. When I realize I am not doing what my Father expects, I have a decision to make. This may seem like a little transgression, but deciding to disobey God is never a little thing – to Him, and we need to see it that way.

**Romans 12:12** Rejoicing in hope; **patient in tribulation;** continuing instant in prayer;

As soon as we see ourselves wallowing in self-pity over some circumstance and we recall that we are to be patient in tribulation, we have a decision to make; will we have a godly response or will we favor our flesh instead? If we choose the flesh, we are telling God "No." And that is no little thing.

**Romans 12:14** **Bless them which persecute you:** bless, and curse not.

**Romans 12:17** **Recompense to no man evil for evil.** Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

These are all the same. Our problem this week is not going to be the terrible crimes against humanity, but how we allow ourselves to think and act.

- Will we please our Father, or will we tell Him “No.”
- Will we allow the life of His Son to be lived in us, or not?
- Will we allow lust to be entertained in our minds or will we think godly thoughts?
- Will we criticize and discredit one another or will we build each other up in the faith?
- Will we respond to irritations and inconveniences with frustration and short-tempered display, or will we love our offender and seek to minister grace to them?
- Will we be righteous, or will we refuse?

These are all the “little rebellions” that we have to see are, at their core, doing exactly what Lucifer did; rebelling against God’s will.

#### **4. justifies God’s judgment**

*God judged Israel according to the Law – this is one part of our bi-dispensational theodicy; the evil of judgments was part and parcel of God’s dealings with Israel, the covenanted blessings and curses (defeat, famine, plague, sickness, etc.)*

***We are not being judged in that way today*** – the longsuffering of God is the second part of this bi-dispensational theodicy. God is using His goodness in not judging men for their sin during this DoGG.

*This leads some to think of the “angry” OT God, vs. the more merciful NT God. Those sufferings were part of the “contract” with Israel. Just because God isn’t judging the world for its sins today does not mean He is okay with it. He is not.*

#### **5. shows us that human evil has its own consequences**

*I want to talk about this in two ways:*

- A. *We don’t ask why bad people suffer, only good. But there are “none good, no not one” according to Paul. By thinking that way, we are:*
  - a. **losing sight of the point.** *everyone suffers (good and bad) because 1) we live in a fallen world, and 2) sin has its own consequences. These are not being orchestrated by God any more than He is directing the hurricane or guiding us to an accident.*
  - b. **Asking the wrong question.** *We are assuming that God should be shielding some people from suffering because they don’t deserve it. Again, it misses the point that natural evil and moral evil all have their own consequences.*
- B. *To ask God to mitigate the consequences of sin is tantamount to **asking God to enable our sinning.** You don’t realize it yet (but you will before this theodicy is over) but a very big part of your eternity is dependent upon God NOT mitigating the consequences of sin. Even so, God has intervened by the death of His Son, not to do away with the effects of evil in this present world, but to provide for two more important things:*

1) the opportunity to **avoid the penalty** of sin by giving us, among other things, eternal life, and  
2) the ability to “**suffer with Him**” as we experience those consequences. (By the way, if the “with Him” is superfluous, you don’t have anything to learn when you suffer – kind of ridiculous because that means that whining about my situation, questioning or accusing God would net the same result as displaying God’s all-sufficient grace. Those two ways of responding to sufferings do not produce the same glory for God, they do not equally edify, and they do not equally impact men and angels. It becomes ludicrous to think that Rom.8:17 just means “if we suffer” – which we all do to one extent or another. I want to step aside for a moment and expand on the “suffer with Him” aspect of this. Just because we are JUEL does not mean we won’t experience Natural Evil (sickness/weather/ etc.) or Moral Evil (wronged, robbed, killed). But it does mean that those sufferings are opportunities:

- **to be conformed to the image of Christ** – this is what transforms us whereby we are “good”
- **to grow in grace** – every suffering is a chance to mature, to gain experience in handling sufferings in a godly fashion and receive the “joint-heir” portion of our inheritance. And how do we do that? By:
  - **not dwelling on the suffering** or the circumstance: use the 5-second countdown to change thinking
  - by seeing this as an **opportunity for godliness**:
    - **in us**, working to transform us
    - **on display**, for men and angels to see (more about this one later)
  - by **ministering to our offender** (if there is one): bless them which persecute you/feed your enemy/ all with the motive of salvation or edification
  - by **living out of the doctrine**: no evil for evil/leave vengeance with God/overcome evil with good

Now, let’s return to our sufferings being opportunities to:

- to put the life of Christ on display
- to impact Satan’s realm
- to glorify your Father
- and to become more than a conqueror

(And don’t think of the sufferings as just the big stuff or the PoE stuff that comes from Satan. It can be little things like irritations, inconveniences, disappointments, etc.)

#### 6. **shows just how lost people are**

The depravity of man shows atheism to be intellectually dishonest as it lays the consequences of human behavior at God’s doorstep. Knowing just how bad people really are (in both their conduct and their heart) shows just how lost they are, how much they need to be saved.

**7. *Demonstrates that no human government will ever achieve utopia; will never complete justice; all will disappoint***

*That does not negate our responsibilities to it as a divine institution.*

**8. *Allows the Cross to reveal the depth of human evil, while human evil requires the greatness of the Cross - the extreme consequences of sin could only be rectified by God sacrificing Himself to pay the debt. The greatest possible payment, the greatest sacrifice which could be made, was necessary to pay the debt of sin.***

There is one more point concerning why we need to understand the depth of our sinfulness, but before we cover it, I want to put a postscript on this point by asking a question. And the point I am trying to make here is for us to see **what makes a good person**. When we ask the question, “Why do good people suffer?” not only are we asking the wrong question, but we assume people are good when they are not. We think, if a guy does good things, he must be good. So, I want to flip the question around... **“Why do bad people do good things?”**

Think about it. Why do dishonest people stop at red lights? Why do blasphemers of God compliment other people? Why do serial killers mow their neighbor’s lawn?

It is all self-interest. They don’t do these things out of moral goodness, they stop at red lights out of self-interest. They do not want to be T-boned by a tractor-trailer rig.

Profane people speak politely out of self-interest; they want to be perceived a certain way that is advantageous for them. They are acting out of some form of self-interest.

Serial killers do kind deeds for reason of self-interest (so they are not discovered), but it is not out of godly love for people.

The point here is: Doing good things out of self-interest is not really a good deed, it is a selfish, self-promoting deed. (But it makes the flesh feel really good.)

This is a subject which I spent a lot of time looking at and we could look at a lot of things in the Scripture in connection with it, but we don’t have time to do a full treatment.

So, let me ask you, what is it about people that make us think they are good? We think they are “good” because they do certain things, or they do not do certain other things. But, are they really “good” if the reason they are not doing certain things, or doing other things, is all out of self-interest?

The Bible says that motive is important and not just the deed. In fact, the right deed for the wrong motive, God rejects.

For example, the reason people don’t commit adultery with co-workers they are attracted to, is probably not out of righteousness, it is out of self-interest. Jesus said to lust is to commit adultery in your heart. So, what makes you good is not what you don’t act on, it concerns what is in your

heart. We see a guy who keeps his marriage vows and we think he is a good guy. But God sees his heart, and if he is wishing or fantasizing about something else, he isn't good, no matter what we think of him.

The reason some guy doesn't kill another guy which he hates, is not out of moral goodness or love. John wrote to the little flock, if you hate your brother, you are a murderer in your heart. Just because you don't kill the guy you hate does not make you good. Again, God looks at the heart.

1 John 3:14-18 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we **love the brethren**. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. **Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:** and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and **we ought to lay down our lives** for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and **shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him**, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

The reason people don't do the bad things which are in their heart is because they are not willing to pay the price for their behavior. A man won't kill his enemy, not because he loves him, but because he doesn't want to go to prison. Another guy won't commit the adultery he fantasizes about because he doesn't want to lose his family.

For most people, putting righteousness on display is not their motivation, a profound desire to be godly is not the reason they are holding back from certain behaviors. It is not the love of Christ that constrains them. It is not what is best for the other person that guides their behavior. Righteousness is not their intent. It is the fear of being caught; it is the consequences.

Unfortunately, for many people, believers included, most of what they do is rooted in self-interest. Self-interest keeps them from doing things they wish they could and it makes them do things they know are expected. But you understand there is no self-interest that God rewards. Self-interest does not edify. Self-interest is not enough to please God.

But, if a person thinks they have found a way to do some bad thing and avoid the penalties, they will do it. Happens all the time.

The point to this postscript is this: Many, if not most, decisions are not out of godliness, they are out of self-interest. But everyone looking at the people around them think they are "good" people when really, they are not. Our Father doesn't. He is looking at the heart. **When He sees His Son formed in our inner man, He calls that good.**

As we are edified, the line of what we are willing to do is moving in one direction while the line for what we are not willing to do is moving in the opposite direction. It is a process that happens in connection with our edification.

When God sees us with our self-interest controlling our sin and bad behavior, He knows how hollow that is. And that will not work for us in eternity. Are you following what I am saying? If we are doing what do out of self-interest, then we are losing the lesson that is being taught to us.

We want to know why good people suffer. Well, people aren't as good as we make them out to be.

If consequences are what is keeping you from doing *anything*, you are not "good" just because you don't follow through. That is a false goodness.

Unfortunately, self-interest is the determining factor for what most Christians do or don't do. It is not the word of God working in their inner man that guides them. **And the evil and suffering that you see around you or read about or hear about in the news, all of that is supposed to be telling all of us something that is supposed to greatly impact us in the ages to come; sin is incredibly reckless, irresponsible and unwise.**

People have a free will, to sin or not. People often choose sin. In eternity, we will still have free will. We will maintain the ability to choose; to obey or disobey, to sin or to be righteous. We will not be robots. We will not have a heavenly lobotomy. God is not going to wave a magic wand and do something to our minds so that we can no longer sin. So let me tell you what is going to happen, in eternity, we will freely choose righteousness every single time, even though we will all possess the ability to disobey.

So, how is this going to happen? How is it that we can still have a free will and not commit sin, for all of eternity? Not one member of the body of Christ will defy God's will, not even once, not even a little. How is that possible without God limiting our free will? It will happen, and before we are finished with this Theodicy, I am going to show you how. For now let me just say that God is going to take us through a multi-staged education that, once it is finished, it will so impact us that we will never choose to disobey God or commit sin again...ever!

And the only reason we choose to disobey now is because this education has not been learned by us. It is the same education that allowed the Lord Jesus to be "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." It wasn't magic. It wasn't just because He was God, even though He was. But we are NOT going to be turned into gods so we can act righteously. Jesus did not sin because He knew some things, which so impacted Him, that He ALWAYS chose to do His Father's will.



In eternity, God is not going to get our obedience by looking over our shoulder every single moment so that there is no real freedom of choice. Our obedience is not going to be forced, and thereby, illegitimate; it is going to be from our heart, gladly, and without reservation. In fact, quite the opposite, we will INSIST upon it!

I have a lot to say about this, but not yet. In the final point of this Theodicy (point #10), I am going to give you 8 reasons why, with our free will intact, God will never have to worry about us transgressing against Him in the least thing throughout all of eternity.

And what I am telling you (even though you may not get it yet) is that by allowing us to realize the depravity of ordinary people (like us!), by showing us the atrocities of which men are capable, by convincing us that people are only *good* when they are *godly*, by allowing us to experience suffering in our own lives, and by showing us just how terrible our sin really is, God is **beginning an education** that will culminate in us being as repelled by sin as our Father is! We will stand aghast at it and be terrified of even the thought of it.

The “pleasures of sin” will hold no sway with us whatsoever, not even a little. You’ll see. Just stick with me and you will see.

So, again, when it comes to moral evil, it is man who needs to account to God for doing it, not God to account for why He allows it.

And now let’s return to our list and do the last one.

### ***Human Evil has Divine Consequences***

*God cannot look the other way, if good and evil exists, there must be an accounting. If sin is as bad as God says it is, then God cannot enable sinners by ignoring it. All we have to do is look at what God allowed His own Son to go through to start realizing the depth of what we have done. I am not saying that bad things are God’s punishment for present evils done, I am saying that after our lives on earth are over, there will be a judgment for those who have rejected God’s offer of eternal life and the consequences they incur will be just.*

And we saved this one for last because it segues perfectly into the next major point of our theodicy, “How is Eternal Punishment Fair?” That’s the next logical question, isn’t it?

## Theodicy: Session 7

As often is the case when I am teaching with notes, please listen to the recording as I will often mention things verbally which are not in the notes. Also, please take the time to read the notes after listening because I will also include things in the notes which I have decided not to cover in the recording. Both of these are true for sessions 7-8.

Is it ever alright to allow evil and suffering? It is, if the following four conditions are met:

- If allowing the suffering is the only means to the procurement of a good
- That the good is actually produced
- That the one allowing the suffering has the right to allow it
- That the good produced outweighs the suffering allowed

For people: Let's say a child was skateboarding and fell and broke some teeth off (I use this example because this happened to my oldest son). At the dentist, there was some pain associated with fixing his teeth. Was allowing that pain evil? Let's take it through the four steps: My son's suffering was not evil if: there was no better way to fix his teeth, as long as the repairs actually worked, as long as a parent has the right to take a child to the dentist, and the resulting benefit would outweigh the suffering of the repair.

For God: His allowing of suffering in the world is not evil if: there is no other way to accomplish the good which needs to be accomplished, if that good actually gets provided, if He has the moral right to allow for the suffering, and if the good He is producing is big enough to justify the suffering.

I am going to maintain that all four conditions are met. We will come back to this again later because it segues perfectly into a point we must examine. But first...

### 4) How Can Eternal Punishment be Fair?

- g. In the past, hell was expressed in unbiblical terms that exaggerated and even mischaracterized it (embellished). An example of this would be Dante's *Inferno* where naked sinners are being stung all over by wasps, others gagging in a river of blood, and other torments I cannot describe in a public setting. And that is not the only example of embellishing the torments of hell; there have been many through the centuries. It serves no one to seek to portray hell as worse than it is, but at the same time, we can't portray hell as anything less than the horrible thing it is. So, while this is not a study on hell, although I think a proper study on hell is important, it is enough of a study for us to see God's justness in sending people to a place of eternal separation from Him and eternal torment.
- h. We must do this without inventing doctrines which seem to let God off the hook (so to speak). Here, I am referring mainly to the doctrines of annihilationism and universal salvation. Annihilationism says that after a sinner has been sufficiently

punished, God mercifully just takes him out of existence. Universal salvation basically says that a sinner will suffer in hell until he repents, at which point, God will stop his torment and bring him into heaven. That means that some will suffer longer, but how long they suffer is up to them, not God. I believe the Bible teaches neither of those, and while they may make people feel better about hell, our goal here is not to invent doctrines for the sake of justifying God's actions.

- i. The difference between hell and the lake of fire

Hell is in the heart of the earth – Mt. 12:40

- i. Hell was created for the devil and his angels –

Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, **prepared for the devil and his angels:**

- ii. Timeline:

- j. Details of Luke 16:

Luke 16:19 There was a certain **rich man**, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: **20** And there was a certain **beggar named Lazarus**, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

Luke 16:22-31 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

- i. **Luke 16 is not a parable** (names) but an actual event

- 1. **People are never named in parables**; without exception. In this scripture however, three people are named, Lazarus (v20, 23) , Abraham (v23, 24), and Moses (v29, 31), of which Moses and Abraham are definite historical figures who are mentioned many

times elsewhere in the scriptures. Parables, on the other hand, refer to people as “a sower” (Mt. 13:3), “a man” (Mt. 13:31), a certain king (Mt. 22:2), “the master of the house” (Matthew 24:42-44), “that evil servant” (Matthew 24:48-51), “a man taking a far journey” (Mark 13:34-37), “a judge” (Luke 18:2), “a widow” (Luke 18:3), “a certain man” (Luke 13:6), “a certain rich man” (Luke 12:16), a steward (Luke 16:1), a certain householder (Mt. 21:33), an “husbandman” (Mt. 21:35), “servants” (Mt. 21:34) and so on; but none named.

2. **Every parable has an earthly setting, which the people hearing could relate to, but never a heavenly or spiritual one.** In this scripture however, hell (v23), and 'Abraham's bosom' (v22), are not earthly settings, showing that this is not a parable.

As such, parables themselves do not directly reference: 1) spiritual beings, or 2) otherworldly places or events. That does not mean that the interpretation of the parable cannot refer to spiritual beings, for some of them do. For example 'the reapers' in the parable of the wheat and tares, are 'angels' in the explanation, and “the enemy” in the parable is “the Devil.” (Matthew 13:39). So, if spiritual beings, such as angels, only appear in the explanation, but never in a parable, then this scripture about the rich man in hell cannot be a parable, because angels are also directly mentioned (v22). Secondly, “hell” is definitely not part of normal earthly living, which violates the second tenant of how parables are constructed. And Luke 16 references the underworld of both “hell” and “Abraham’s Bosom.” The conclusion to be drawn is that Jesus was relating a true story; the rich man and Lazarus were people who actually lived and died.

3. **Parables never contradict doctrinal truth.** The reason some want to make this a parable is because Jesus directly contradicts the idea of soul-sleep. Therefore, it would not matter if this was a parable, the truth of it still stands. However, Luke 16 is not a parable.

I want to say a word about the soul-sleep issue. Firstly, the Bible talks about the conscious awareness of the souls of those whose body has died. Here is Luke 16 is an example of the consciousness of the rich man (his soul). This is also true of the future members of the believing remnant of Israel who will be killed by the Antichrist’s extermination policy.

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of them that were slain** for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

So we are talking about the souls, which makes sense because the “slain” is a reference to their bodies, not their souls.

Revelation 6:10 And **they cried with a loud voice, saying**, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Does that sound like they are asleep? No, these souls know what has happened to them and they are asking God how long it will be until He avenges their blood which, evidently, they know He will do. They are awake, they are talking, they have memory, and this is all being done as bodiless souls. And what will be the answer given to them?

Revelation 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and **it was said unto them**, that **they should rest yet for a little season, until** their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

The word “rest” is not talking about “sleep” either. The word “**rest**” is defined by the remainder of the verse. There are many definitions for the word “rest.” It can mean:

To take rest by lying down or relaxing, and esp. by going to sleep; to lie still to refresh oneself, to lie asleep. – *this is not the definition*

to relieve or refresh by rest; to lay to rest. – *this is not the definition*

To continue in a current state or stay in the same place without change or movement; to remain. – *this is not the definition*

to remain content in the specified condition – *this is not the definition*

To be at ease; to have peace of mind – *this is not the definition*

The word “rest” in Revelation 16 is the same definition as in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

God did not go to sleep; He **ceased His activity** of creating – that is the definition; to cease activity or labor. So, what is being said to them? Well, they are definitely worked up (cried with a loud voice) “how long...?” and they are told their time has come for them to cease from those earthly struggles until...the rest of what has been prophesied should be fulfilled.

One more thing, all the “sleep” terminology that is your Bible is referring to the state of your body, not your soul. For example:

**Daniel 12:2** And many of them that **sleep in the dust of the earth shall** awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

What is “sleeping” in the dust of the earth is the body. The soul has left the body and either will be “in hell” or “present with the Lord.”

**2 Corinthians 5:6** Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

**2 Corinthians 5:8** We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be **absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**

Unless the Lord is also buried in the earth, then your soul or spirit can't be in the dust of the earth, because we will be with Him.

I have given you a very, very basic overview of what I do not subscribe to soul-sleep. Of course, you can think what you want.

Having established the reality of Luke 16, what can we observe from what Jesus is saying?

- ii. The rich man is not screaming hysterically because he is burning
- iii. The rich man is not incoherent with pain
- iv. He reasons, makes requests (vs. 24), converses, argues, and rebuts (vs. 30)
- v. Unless we think Jesus is passing along inaccurate information about the afterlife, Luke 16 can be instructional
- vi. The fire of hell is not a material phenomena, just as the soul in hell is not physical – There have always been preachers who have seen the descriptions of hell as metaphors for the suffering in hell. When we think of the fires of hell, 1) we think of a physical fire, and 2) we think in terms of our physical bodies. So let's talk about these. It was not the rich man's physical body which was being tormented. How do we know?

**Luke 16:22-23** And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, **and was buried**; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

This has caused some to mistakenly think that “hell” is “the grave.” What is happening here is that the rich man died, they buried his body in a grave, but his soul (the real him, the immaterial him) went to hell, which is not the grave but a compartment in the heart of the earth which was originally designed for Satan and his angels.

How do we know hell is not the grave? We know from the words of Jesus Himself.

Luke 12:4-5 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

So, if hell is the grave, Jesus would be saying, “Do not be afraid of the guy who can kill your body, but be afraid of the guy who buries you.” That does not make any sense at all. So, don’t be afraid of the guy who will murder you, be afraid of the undertaker.

There are some things to understand about your immaterial soul; if the grave is for the body and hell is for the soul, they cannot both be the same thing because a body dies when the soul leaves the body.

**James 2:26** For **as the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is dead also.

Context: Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin.

Genesis 35:17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18 And it came to pass, **as her soul was in departing**, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.

What was her soul departing from? From her body.

Well, if the body is in the grave and soul is no longer in the body, then hell cannot be the grave.

Now, back to the issue of suffering in hell.

Firstly, when we think of the fires of torment in hell or the lake of fire, we usually think about it from the standpoint of the physical, and that will lead us to some wrong conclusions. One of those wrong conclusions would be to see all the descriptors of hell as metaphors. (More about that shortly) Remember, a soul is immaterial. Normal, physical fire would have little (if any) effect on a soul or spirit. If a soul cannot hammer in a nail, if a soul cannot fly a plane (and it can’t because it cannot materially interact with the physical world without a body), what makes us think a physical flame can affect a non-material soul? Also, based on some things said in the scripture, the pain receptors in a soul, I should think, are somewhat different than those in our physical bodies. And therefore, the sense of “pain” would not be identical to how we would feel in a physical body.

Obviously, the rich man felt torment, but not the excruciating pain we would feel if standing in a fire. The fact that this is a different kind of fire (an immaterial fire) also implies that this kind of fire can exist without creating light, like a physical fire. That would explain the seeming contradiction of hell being a fire and, at the same time, a place of outer darkness. Again, we are assigning all the properties of a physical fire to the fires of eternal torment, and I think that kind of fire is different, not subject to the laws of physics as we know them. Think about it; a fire that torments eternally, but does not cause mindless, excruciating pain that renders a soul unable to do anything but scream in agony. This kind of fire could not be used to generate electricity, or run a steam engine; it is not a material fire, as it possesses properties that are very different from physical fire. It is a fire that evidently does not destroy the nerves or pain receptors of a soul which without, the pain would soon vanish. It is a fire that does not put off light. It is a fire that does not consume the soul or reduce it to ashes. It is a fire that may have no fuel source, yet it is able to burn forever.

But I am not convinced that all the suffering in hell is just from some kind of fire. I think there are other things taking place that make hell (or the lake of fire) a place of torment.

- vii. The Bible describes hell as: weeping (Matt 8:12), wailing (Matt 13:42), gnashing of teeth (Matt 13:50), darkness (Matt 25:30), flames (Luke 16:24), burning (Isa 33:14), torments (Luke 16:23) everlasting fire, (Mt. 25:46) everlasting punishment, (2 Th. 1:9) everlasting destruction, (Is. 66:24) endless corruption (their worm shall not die), (Dan. 12:2) shame and everlasting contempt.



## Session 8

### k. Hell's Justification

- i. We downplay the seriousness of human sin and view people as less sinful than they are
- ii. All human rebellion against God is akin to Lucifer's rebellion
  1. Lucifer's rebellion resulted, directly or indirectly, in every bad thing that ever happened on the planet
  2. Lucifer's rebellion will result in a war in heaven
- iii. We drastically underestimate the full horror of sin and rebellion against God
- iv. Are Hell's Occupants Unrepentant?

Eternal separation from God makes sense if the occupants of hell remain eternally unrepentant. This is not indisputable in the Scripture (so I am not being dogmatic about it), but it is compatible with much of what we know about hell.

While the following examples are not specifically about those in hell, it is the same principle of fiery punishment while they remain unrepentant in Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

Revelation 16:8-9 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: **and they repented not** to give him glory.

Revelation 16:10-11 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And **blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.**

Revelation 9:13-15 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Revelation 9:20-21 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet **repented not** of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: **Neither repented they** of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The people know exactly what they are doing, they know who they are rebelling against, they know there are consequences and yet, they persist in their actions.

And finally, look at the last thing said in the book of Revelation, just prior to its benediction.

Revelation 22:10-12 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. **He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still:** and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

There is something else about this idea of the lost being unrepentant and it has to do with their attitude toward God and perhaps toward being in hell or the lake of fire.

There is a bit of a parallelism in this passage in that, if the righteous and holy will continue to do so in anticipation of eternal righteousness and holiness, then could we not also conclude that the vile continue their vileness in anticipation of that which they will live and practice throughout eternity?

The scripture does not tell us that any of the occupants of hell will be repentant.

If we move to the gospels, take a look at the description of those who are suffering judgment.

**Matthew 8:12** But the children of the kingdom shall be **cast out into outer darkness:** there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 13:42** And shall **cast them into a furnace of fire:** there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 13:50** And shall **cast them into the furnace of fire:** there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 22:13** Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and **cast him into outer darkness;** there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 24:51** And shall **cut him asunder,** and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 25:30** And cast ye the unprofitable servant **into outer darkness:** there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Luke 13:28** There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you ***yourselves thrust out.***

Some would say that the “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is a sign of repentance, but the traditional rabbinic thought of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is more like this; sometimes weeping is associated with sorrow, but gnashing of teeth is almost always associated with anger, not anguish. For example, look at what the Sanhedrin council did with Stephen:

**Acts 7:54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and **they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.**

This was a measure of their anger at what Stephen had said to them. Now, look at the phrase in the OT.

**Job 16:9** He teareth *me* in his wrath, who hateth me: **he gnasheth upon me with his teeth**; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.

**Psalms 37:12** The wicked plotteth against the just, and **gnasheth upon him with his teeth.**

**Lamentations 2:16** All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and **gnash the teeth**: they say, We have swallowed *her* up: certainly this *is* the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen *it*.

So, what about the rich man in Luke 16? For himself, he never speaks of being repentant about his treatment of Lazarus. In fact, the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to fetch him water and bring it to him through the flames. In other words, he asked if Lazarus could leave his place of comfort (vs. 25) to serve him. Later, he wants Lazarus to leave his place of comfort to go warn his brothers.

But there may be more evil here, with the rich man, than we first think. When the rich man asks for Lazarus to go back and warn his brothers about hell, there is an implication that God did not supply him (the rich man) with sufficient warning. He even argues the insufficiency of Moses and the prophets (the scriptures) which indicates how he really feels about God’s word.

He thinks He knows better. Evidently, God didn’t give him enough information to avoid hell, so it isn’t his fault he is there, it’s God’s.

The irony here is that there was a man named Lazarus who came back from the dead and the religious leaders in Israel responded to his resurrection by trying to kill both Jesus and the resurrected Lazarus.

John 12:9-11 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

So much for “though one rose from the dead, they would believe.”

Men are lost by a conscious rejection of God, not by lack of information. Hardness of heart is the problem. And we have no reason to believe that will change at the judgment, as what they want is separation from God. This is subject that deserves more than just a few minutes which we cannot do in this study, so let me just say that at the judgment, when the veneer of civilization is stripped away and people are revealed for who they really are, then we will see those who reject God for who they really are.

Again, because of a lack of absolute statements in our Bible, there is room for discussion on this topic. But just as likely as people repenting at the judgment is the idea that the losts’ true attitude toward God is revealed in its fullness. It is just as likely that hell’s occupants do not want to be with God. No, they will not enjoy hell, but they also would not enjoy heaven.

Let me cap off this section with a few quotes from well-known people:

Mark Twain, writing to his wife, “I am plenty safe enough in his hands, I am not in any danger from that kind of Deity. The one that I want to keep out of reach of is the caricature of him which one finds in the Bible. We (that one and I) could never respect each other, never get along together. I have met his superior a hundred times – in fact I amount that to myself.”

Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong wrote that the God of the Bible is “...a God I cannot respect, much less worship; a deity whose needs and prejudices are at least as large as my own.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, “I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. No, I would say sorry, I mean I would much rather go to the other place.”

Philosopher John Mill said, “Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.”

And while most folk who reject God are not so openly defiant, they are just as defiant in their heart.

- l. Hell as a Deterrent – for many, hell led them Christ
- m. Can We Ever Feel Good About Hell? I don’t think we are supposed to feel good about it, but we should always remember that the same God who created hell, also allowed His Son to suffer the torturous death on the Cross to pay for our sins so we would not have to go there.

## **5) Free Will – Is it Worth it?**

- a. Free will is the ability to do differently than you have done

- b. Free Will eliminates the guarantee we will always choose good and therefore, if God created us with free will, then He must allow us to do evil or good. That is as logical as it gets. God is not at fault for allowing us to do evil.
- c. Without free will, we are only robots (less than animals)
- d. Free will is not negated by human depravity – what I mean is that the lost are under sin’s mastery, but that does mean they must choose to do every sin that comes into their minds. Their nature is inclined to sin, but a lost man can choose not to steal, for example. They still make real choices and are genuinely accountable for those choices.
- e. The real (not feigned) exercise of free will demands that God’s existence not be too obvious. As believers, we wish that God would make His presence more apparent, then people would know for sure. But if God wants us to truly be free moral agents, He cannot make His presence too apparent. If God’s existence was absolutely unmistakeable every moment, people would abstain from desires they would otherwise indulge, violating their true free will. But it would not make them better people! It would just limit their true choices. God created man to have genuine freedom and we will enjoy that freedom throughout eternity. But if God was looking at us every moment, much of the time that loyalty would be feigned. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus gave enough evidence of who He was for those who freely chose to believe in Him could, and those who freely chose to reject could. The same is true of God’s existence and presence. It would be easy for God to station angels with large, flaming swords all over the world to cut down anyone who rebelled against God, but how many of them would be true worshippers of God? True worship must be uncoerced.
- f. God desires real relationship – if He limits our free will or simply “makes” us do the right thing, that is not a real relationship.
- g. Natural laws have to work in regular ways – so when someone says, Why did God let me break my foot, or let that car run into me, or fall off the ladder?... we have to understand that the natural law of gravity has to work in a regular way or we will not know what we can or can’t do with respect to it. We have to know that a guy can steer his car into ours, either on purpose or in carelessness, but the actions have to work consistently or we should never get into a car.  
Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne says it this way: “If God is to allow us to acquire knowledge by learning from experience and above all to allow us to chose whether to acquire knowledge at all or even to allow us to have a very well-adjusted knowledge of the consequences of our actions – knowledge which we need if we are to have a free and efficacious choice between good and bad – he needs to provide natural evils occurring in regular ways in consequence of natural processes. Or, rather, He needs to do this if he is not to give us too evident an awareness of His presence.”

Because we live in a world where natural laws work in regular ways, we can fall off a ladder or have an auto accident.

Even though the issue of free will has been around for a long time, people generally know very little about it, or think about very little. But it still shows up from time to time in the most unexpected places, like science fiction movies. In 1956 a movie was made, “The Invasion of the Body Snatchers.” Since that time, it has been remade three times. The point is that while people slept, they were replaced by a person who was physically identical, but without all the baggage of desire, love, ambition, faith, etc. But the heroine protests, “I don’t want to live in a world without love or grief or beauty.” She thought a world with grief was better than a world with no feeling at all. And what was she saying? Without free will. In science fiction, free will is always portrayed as extremely valuable and essential to humans. In fact, it glorifies free will above everything else. It prefers free will even in the face of loss and suffering. No movie has ever depicted that the human race would be better off without free will.

What I am attempting to do here is lay a foundation for where this theodicy is going; to give a reason for God to be justified in allowing sin and evil in the world. I do this by the premise that **the allowance of suffering is for the accomplishment of a much greater good, a very necessary good which will not be fully realized until we get into the heavenly places; the retention of our free will.**

**So much of what we know about life, of what we experience in life, of what makes life wonderful – pleasure, relationships, joy, fellowship, community, happiness, family, friendship, brotherhood, camaraderie, fulfillment, love, responsibility, righteousness, integrity, godliness – is dependent upon our being free moral agents.**

I am attempting to convey just how important our free will is, because only in understanding that, can we properly answer the question “Is having free will for eternity worth the sufferings in a single lifetime?”

Here are our choices for why God allows suffering:

- There is no God, therefore, suffering has no meaning
- God allows evil because He is not perfectly good
- God allows evil because He lacks the power to stop it
- God orchestrates everything (evil included) simply because He can
- God allows evil and suffering in order to accomplish a necessary good which far outweighs the suffering

So, what is this necessary, greater “good” which God is accomplishing by allowing evil and suffering?

- The “good” is an education about sin and suffering which will result in the retention of our free will in eternity – the retention of which is vital to the kind of life we are going to have.

I want us to look at the only choices available to us as we think through this issue. Our choices involve only 2 variables, 1) free will, and 2) sin. The first variable only has two possibilities, we either will have free will in eternity or we will not. The second variable only has two possibilities, either we will continue to sin in eternity, or we will not. That leaves us with only 4 choices.

- When it comes to free will, the choices are:
  - We will not have free will in eternity and we will still sin

This one makes no sense at all, for the whole purpose of limiting free will is to settle the sin issue.

- We will not have free will in eternity and we will not sin

While this one would solve the sin issue, it would derail everything that God has planned for us in eternity. I have tried to demonstrate the repercussions of not having a free will, we would cease to be who we are and become only robots with a glorified body.

- We will have free will in eternity and we will still sin

This is not compatible with all we understand about eternity. No more pain, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more death, the satanic policy of evil destroyed, and the return of righteousness to the heavenly places all indicate that sin will not be an issue in eternity.

- We will have free will in eternity, but we will not sin

I believe the last one is the truth of how things will be.

Now, the question is: How will God accomplish this? Since the root of the sin issue is found in our free will, how will we be made sinless while maintaining our free will?

If God does anything to impede, restrict or limit our choices, then we no longer have free will, so the answer lies in one of the other choices; either we will not have free will and thereby do not sin, or we will have free will and we will sin in eternity. Either one of those sound right to you?

But again, supposing the last choice is the correct one, how will it come to pass that we will never choose to sin, once we are in the heavenly places? The only way for that to be accomplished with our free will intact, is for that to take place **as part of our edification**. And how does any edification take place?

## Theodicy

Some doctrinal truth must be presented to us, which, as we properly respond to it, transforms us in our inner man (our soul and spirit) to convince us of the doctrine (in this case, the foolishness of sin), to such an extent that we will henceforth obey the doctrine, (in this case, refuse sin). The only genuinely true way to make us sinless is by the process of an education which results in an edification unto godliness.

My understanding is that education should be taking place here and now as a part of our edification, along with every other doctrine we are learning.

If you are going to disagree with me, it will likely be connected to one of three areas: (I encourage you to think, to disagree, to ask questions, I certainly don't know it all, but if you are going to disagree, you should have a better answer)

- Either you disagree with the premise of having free will in eternity or being without sin in eternity –
- Or you disagree with the purpose for allowing evil and suffering –
- Or you disagree with the process –

Let's take them one at a time.

If you disagree with the premise that we will be sinless or that we will have free will, then okay. This theodicy is based on those two issues being true. It is not about establishing those things as true. So, that would be a whole different discussion.

If you disagree with the purpose, fair enough, but if God is not allowing evil and suffering in order to educate us, with a view toward our edification resulting in a sinless eternity by an honest expression of our free will, then why is He allowing it? What is His purpose? What greater good is He producing?

Some years ago, there was a radio debate from Great Britain where Richard Norman, a Kent University professor, was arguing that there had to be a way for God to give people free will, and at the same time reduce the amount of suffering in the world. When asked what that better way would be, his reply was, "I don't know, I'm not the Creator." But that is a cop-out, isn't it? If you can't think of a better way, it may be because there isn't one.

If this is not God's purpose in allowing suffering, then what is His purpose?

If you disagree with the process, you think we will have free will, and we will be sinless in eternity, but you do not think God is going to accomplish this edificationally. Again, fair enough, but how then do you expect He will accomplish it?

If He does it by any other means than by an education which leads to an edification, then we no longer have free will. And that changes everything.



## Theodicy

To finish this part off, can you imagine anything that would bring God more glory than for the members of the body of Christ to be so conformed to the image of His Son that they freely choose to refuse sin and embrace righteousness for all eternity?

## **Theodicy: Session 9**

As we unfold this theodicy, I realize there can be objections, such as the objection of gratuitous suffering. By gratuitous suffering, I mean, “suffering which an omnipotent God could have prevented without losing some greater good, or permitting some equally bad or worse suffering. But is there such a thing as gratuitous suffering?

Many would point to the suffering of children and animals. The objection would be: Okay, Michael, let’s suppose you are right that God is allowing evil and suffering for the sake of teaching us to freely refuse evil in eternity. Can’t God still get that message across with less suffering? Can’t God teach us how bad sin is without children dying of cancer?

Two things here: firstly, I know these sessions will likely be viewed by someone who has lost a child to a dread disease or violence of some kind. I am sorry for that loss, so I want to say that what we are about to talk about is not necessarily directed at you. There may come a time when you can hear this, but I am trying to be sensitive as this recording will be seen by many people after today.

But let me introduce you to Edie.

On April 6, 2018, Matt and Amanda said goodbye to their 19-month old daughter, Edie, as she passed away from leukemia. (Edie endured 3 rounds of chemo) Those who knew this family may ask, how was it fair for little Edie to die of cancer? Let’s restate this to a more inclusive question, “If it is unfair for Edie to die of leukemia, wouldn’t it also be unfair for any child to die of leukemia, right? It’s not just Edie, right? No one would disagree.

But let’s broaden the question again. It isn’t just leukemia, is it? Even though cancer is the leading cause of death for children and adolescents, children also die from other causes. And if children dying of cancer is unfair, then it would be unfair for any child to die of any dread disease, like smallpox (in the past) or malaria (in the present), right?

Pneumonia is the leading infectious cause of death among children under 5, killing approximately 700,000 children a year.

UNICEF reports that a child dies of malaria every two minutes. Of the 445,000 people who died of malaria in 2016, 290,000 of them were children under the age of five. Even those who survive the initial illness may never fully recover. Children infected by the disease may experience intellectual disabilities for the rest of their lives

And not just disease, because if it is unfair for God to allow children to die of diseases, then it would also be unfair to allow them to be victims of violence such as dying in a fire, being murdered, or drowning, or being killed in a car accident, right?

But it doesn't stop with dying, does it? Wouldn't it be just as unfair for God to allow children to be raped, or maimed? What we are asking for is multiplied thousands of miracles every day.

So, if God should not allow children to be injured, kidnapped, violated, or allow them to die by murder, accident or disease, up to what age should children be indestructible?

What if we answer, "twelve." But that answer falls apart because how many of us think it is okay for a 13-year-old to be murdered, kidnapped, or abused? Do you see the problem with this charge of unfairness? If we think about it, we don't like the idea of anyone being killed or seriously injured.

The tens of thousands of miracles every day to preserve children would violate a number of things; let me give you five of them:

- It would make God's presence unmistakable, causing people to worship God with feigned loyalty, not truly out of their free will (This is one of the things which I hope you have learned from this theodicy; the balance of God's presence)
- It would create a world where reality does not work in regular ways – kids would be playing marbles on the interstate
- Children could not learn morality because their choices would lack moral compass
- It would require God to constantly interfere with free will
- It would require God to interfere with natural laws

What are we to understand from this? The "senseless suffering" that is experienced by children is the result of human sin, either Adam's or someone else's, depending on the kind of evil, Natural or Moral. The more we are outraged at this kind of suffering, the more outraged we should be toward sin, for sin is at the root of every suffering in the world.

There is a lesson here: sin hurts everyone, even the innocent. If it upsets you that children like Edie die of cancer, then get mad at the sin that caused the Natural Evil of cancer. If it angers you that children are kidnapped and trafficked, get mad at the sin of Moral Evil. Put the blame where it belongs.

Now, I have been driving this point home all through this theodicy. And I will continue to emphasize it, for I believe it is an important ingredient of how we will be sinless in eternity. But it is not the only ingredient. When we get to Major Point #10 in this theodicy, I am going to end with the rest of what we need in order to overcome sin both now and in eternity. In a way, we are saving the best for last.

But for now, the first step is to connect every suffering back to sin. The world doesn't see it this way. There is a huge disconnect between the sufferings we see in this world and the sin behind those sufferings. I am trying to wake us up to the reality of how bad sin is.

Why am I bringing this up? Because people keep asking the same question. If there was a way to give you free will with the guarantee of sinlessness, God would have done it to start with. Truth be told, any being apart from God (who is perfectly good) which has free will, has the ability to sin and cause suffering. The alternatives are: 1) no people, or 2) no free will.

This brings us to our next subject, the ultimate origin of moral evil.

## **6) Understand where moral evil originated**

I want us to understand the first moral evil was perpetrated by Lucifer. Lucifer is directly responsible for moral evil in heaven. He is directly responsible for the angelic rebellion.

Through his deception of Eve in the garden, he is indirectly responsible for Natural Evil which is a direct result of Adam's sin, and he indirectly responsible for the Moral Evil which results from the sin of Adam's descendants. Satan's fingerprints of sin are everywhere in heaven and earth.

Lucifer deceived Eve, Adam followed, their descendants are by nature, under sin and as such, they commit moral evil more and more as the satanic policy of evil works to bring the world to a point of the utter rejection of God.

Lucifer had free will when He was in a perfect heaven. He was perfect in the day He was created, the Bible says. Which brings up two points: 1) This serves as a precedent that we will continue to have free will in heaven, for why would God give free will to angels and to fallen men, and not to His redeemed sons and daughters? 2) It is possible to sin in a perfect heaven. All you need is a being who is not perfectly good like God, and for that being to possess free will.

In the heaven – The explanation of the origins of evil come from understanding a few biblical concepts.

- There was a spirit (angelic) realm before there was a human realm.

I prefer to say *spirit realm* instead of angelic realm because not every *spirit creature* is an angel. It is my understanding that those *spirit creatures* have libertarian free will, just as men do today. When I say *spirit creatures* I am referring to real beings which do not naturally possess a corporeal body. (The Hebrew word, *Elohim*.)

When I say these spirit creatures have *libertarian free will*, I mean that at every decision point, they could have chosen to do something different from that which they actually chose to do.

We have libertarian free will too. For example, you were completely free to eat a hamburger, or not eat a hamburger for lunch. What you ate was not predetermined so that you were bound to

eat a hamburger because your choice was foreordained by God. This is foolishness. This all comes from an erroneous definition of the sovereignty of God, which we may talk about later.

One of the spirit creatures was a being called Lucifer; *light bearer*. He was the anointed cherub that covered the throne of God, a very high position among the spirit creatures.

At some point in time, Lucifer rebelled. And because Lucifer possesses libertarian free will, he can choose to rebel if he wants to. Although God, in His omniscience knew Lucifer would rebel, Lucifer was not predestined to rebel, he freely chose to do so.

Now the question is, “Why did Lucifer rebel?” It is important to get the answer to this question, Lucifer rebelled for the same reason that everyone rebels; they think **they deserve better than they are getting**.

This is an issue of pride and covetousness.

Ezekiel 28:15 Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till **iniquity was found in thee**.

Ezekiel 28:17 **Thine heart was lifted up** because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Lucifer thought he deserved more than he was getting from God. There are a couple of other ways to say this same thing:

- 1) God is holding me back from something that would benefit me
- 2) God is not acting my best interest

What was it Lucifer was not getting? He was not getting control of heaven and earth. He was not going to rule the creation. He was not going to be worshipped at the one who possesses the creation. We know this because he wants to be like *the most High*, which as we know, is a title that means *possessor of heaven and earth*.

Isaiah 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High**.

Genesis 14:19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed *be* Abram of **the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth**:

Genesis 14:22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, **the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth**,

Once Lucifer makes a decision to rebel against God, his next step is to traffic his iniquity to the other spirit beings, especially those who are in the positions of authority.

Ezekiel 28:18 **Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick;** therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

Lucifer also makes a decision to traffic his iniquity on the earth, with men.

Ephesians 6:12 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*.

Our godly response to the things which happen to us create a testimony of the manifold wisdom of God which is put on display to Satan's realm.

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Not all of the princes of heaven joined Satan in his rebellion. There is one principality that remained faithful to God.

Daniel 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Daniel 10:21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and ***there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.***

Satan does not possess it all, but as the prince of the power of the air, he has de facto control over almost all of the principalities in the heavenly places.

## 7) Why does God allow suffering?

We know that God allows suffering in order to bring about a greater good, namely, an education which allows us to be free moral agents in eternity, yet without sin. But that is not the only think God is doing.

- a. The problem of God disallowing suffering
  - i. It prevents or overturns free will

God is not interesting in giving us free will only to intrude upon it. This is not new to you as we have covered much of this under the "Is free will worth it?" section of this theodicy. Now that you have had some time to digest this issue of free will and its importance, let's add another layer to our understanding of it. I want to do this by showing you something about the Lord

Jesus in His earthly ministry. Do you recall a conversation that Jesus had with Pilate about “truth?”

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?...

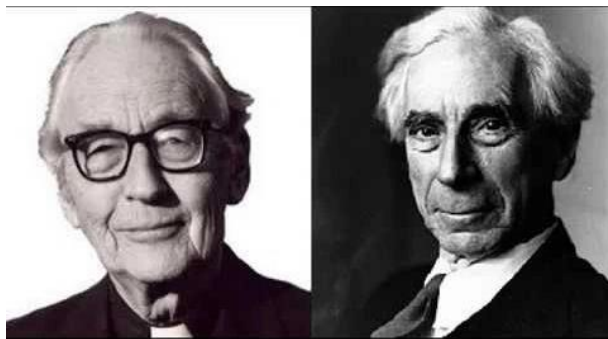
But after the resurrection, if you or I were the Savior, we would likely have appeared to Pilate and said, “Let’s have another conversation about truth...” But Jesus did not do that. Nor did He appear to the chief priest. He only appeared to those who believed in Him. Ever ask yourself “why?” Because He is not overturning anyone’s free will.

Weeks ago during the break I proposed a thought experiment to Clifford. If the Lord Jesus were to appear right here, right now and approach Clifford and say, “There is something I want you to do for me. It is nothing wild, it is something already in my word, but, it will be difficult. Will you do this for me? And Clifford said he would do whatever the Lord asked.

But if the Lord were to not do that, it would be completely up to Clifford to do it or not, when he saw it in God’s word. But if the Lord were to do that in person, Clifford would do it whether he wanted to or not. And that is my point. All God has to do to control all the actions that are contrary to His will is to make His presence known.

- ii. It creates a cartoon world that does not exist in reality
- iii. It makes His presence too obvious

We have talked about this, but I want to add something to it. This point is very similar to the point above, that God will not overturn a man’s free will.



In January 1948, BBC radio aired a debate between Frederick Copleston (Jesuit priest) and Bertrand Russell (atheist) on the *Existence of God*. You can Google the exchange or listen on Youtube.

During the debate Copleston asked Russell, what will you do when you stand before God; what will you say? Russell replied, “I would say, why didn’t you give me more evidence?”

And God has an answer for that. To that question God will say, “Because, Bertrand, I wanted you to make up your own mind, to do what you wanted to do, because that is what makes you who you are.” It is our free will and our choices out of it that make us all who we are. And God is going to allow us to freely choose.

Let me ask you a question, perhaps the deepest question you can be asked: “What is it that you seek in life?” I mean, above paying the bills and making a living, what are you really looking for in life? The answer to that question will tell you a lot about who *you* are. It will tell you a lot about how your human spirit has been formed and the person you have become.

Before we move to the next point, let me talk to us for a moment about the will. A proper instruction concerning the will would take us weeks, so let me just highlight what is most important for you to know right now.

Your will is the executive center of yourself, the real you. It is the part where you, and uniquely you – and this is important – initiate processes, events and bring things into existence. And while we will never be the Creator God, we are meant to be creators of some things which will be to God’s glory. This “creative process” will be a big part of what we will be doing in eternity. (We may take time to enlarge on this is point 9 of our theodicy.)

Your will is the most precious part of you and God Himself respects it; and why wouldn’t He, He made it. God respects our will so much that He will allow people who do not want to be with Him, to be away from Him. And He will not override their will.

This is what makes praying for a lost loved one so hard, especially in the old ways we understood prayer, because what we were actually praying for was for God to override our loved one’s will. And God will not do that.



## Session 10

So why else is God allowing suffering? Let's talk about the sufferings of Christ for a moment.

- b. For advanced saints, there is an individualized attack of the PoE that is designed to make you quit your sonship life. It is designed to make us suffer. In this contention of who will be the rightful possessor of H&E – God will not stop those attacks by use of His omnipotence, but rather He equips us to joyfully endure them to His glory, putting the power of His grace on display. God isn't going to omnipotent His way out of this predicament as it only proves Satan's point. I actually think these begin when you have the doctrine working in you up to and including the second section of godly judgment. They are progressive in nature and these attacks will not exceed our advancement in the doctrine.
- c. Another "greater good" is accomplished in suffering
  - i. Our joint-heir inheritance (reward for suffering)
    - 1. Future reward of glory – our position in the HP
  - ii. It builds our inner man so that:
    - 1. We are more than conquerors (MTC) Rm. 8:37
      - a. We defeat Satan (overcome his attempts to affect us thru sufferings, even the ones he does not initiate)
      - b. We demonstrate God is the most High
      - c. We get a present and future reward of glory (conformed to Christ now/future exaltation in the creature) While there is an inheritance (and a subsequent exaltation in connection with it) awaiting every saint in the ages to come simply because they are in Christ, it is the extent to which we are conformed that determines our "joint-heir" inheritance and its attendant exaltation in eternity.
      - d. Responding properly to sufferings is what makes us MTCs, which is not only a measure of the formation of Christ in our souls, but at the same time, we display the power of God's grace thru our patient endurance which results in God's glory
  - iii. By allowing suffering, God is educating us as to:
    - 1. the consequences of rebellion
      - a. Consequences of sin & rebellion are being put on display everyday
      - b. We should be looking for this part of our education by constantly reminding ourselves that suffering is the consequence of sin. Even if you don't see how a certain sin affects anything, you should make this connection until you

do figure it out. A way to do this is to perform some kind of exercise that will allow you to consciously make the connection between sin and suffering, until this idea is firmly rooted in your mind. Just to recommend something, when

2. the depths of how sinful we really are
3. the only recourse is salvation plus edification
  - a. salvation alone runs off the flesh
  - b. godliness is the only remedy; only godliness can change us, transform us
- d. It moves us to be God's agents of mercy and help as we see others suffering – and this is the life we are called to. Again, a proper treatment of this subject would take us weeks, but in the limited time I have in this theodicy, let me say this – and I am going to apologize ahead of time for giving this such brief attention – take a look at the chart below. In order to set it up, I need to make two statements: 1) the concept of eternal life in the NT is not confined to living forever in heaven, but of having a new kind of life right now. This is a life of flourishing, lived the way we were intended to live, a life of real function; a life of virtue, character and well-being lived by and for the Lord Jesus. 2) There is a big difference between classical happiness and what the world now understands to be happiness. The chart below will highlight the differences.

#### Contemporary Happiness

Pleasurable Satisfaction  
 An intense feeling  
 Dependent upon external circumstances  
 Transitory & Fleeting  
 Addictive & enslaving  
 Split off from the rest of life  
 Doesn't color rest of life  
 Creates false/empty self  
 Strategy: Achieved by self-Absorbed narcissism  
 Outcome: Success produces a  
 A celebrity

#### Classical Happiness

Virtue & Well-Being  
 Pleasure in contentment  
 Springs from within  
 More permanent & stable  
 Empowering & liberating  
 Integrated w/ whole  
 personality, colors everything else  
 creates true self  
 Strategy: Achieved by self-denying sonship  
 Outcome: Success produces  
 a hero

Don't forget the point: suffering moves us to be God's agents of mercy and help. This is how we labor with God.

We need to see ourselves in light of a cause which is larger than us, the outworking of God's plan in the world. This is not just a vision worth dying for; it is one worth living for. We should preoccupy ourselves with finding our role in that plan, and fulfilling it well.

We should view all of life's activities as occasions to draw near to God; opportunities to become like Christ. Then we can become the kind of people who make those around us better at living their lives too. Our long term focus should be to give ourselves away, for Christ's sake.

True happiness never comes from instant gratification, it is an empty sack. Now, don't swing the pendulum too far in the opposite direction. All I am saying is that those things which bring true happiness are worth living life for, while personal pleasure produces an empty self. For example, watching a ball game may produce some pleasure as long as the game is on, but it rarely, if ever, translates into anything better, such as being a better father or husband.

- e. In Israel's program
  - i. Punishment for sin (sins of Amorites not yet full)
  - ii. Judgment for Israel for breaking the Law
  - iii. Moral and Natural Evils are already in place
  - iv. The remedy of repentance
  - v. The role of prayer - repentance
  - vi. The benefit of obtaining the blessings
- f. In the DoGG
  - i. Moral and Natural evils are already in place
  - ii. The remedy of godliness
  - iii. The role of prayer – relationship

- g. God also allows suffering so that He might prepare us for reigning with Him.

It is true that our "reigning with Him" is connected with our "suffering with Him," just like our joint-heir inheritance is.

Romans 8:17 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.

2 Timothy 2:12 **If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him***: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

And since there is so much suffering, that means there is plenty of opportunity to reign and inherit in eternity. But, as you know, I do not believe that reigning and the joint-heir inheritance are automatic, you don't get them just because you suffer, but because you endure suffering "with Him." That means that what we do, when it comes to suffering (or anything else for that matter), we do "in His name."

Colossians 3:17 And **whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

I realize I am jumping us into some advanced doctrine here, but for now, let us limit its application to the suffering issue. “Whatsoever” is a big umbrella! But when we endure suffering to the glory of God, that means we are enduring our suffering “in the name of the Lord.” And what does it mean to do anything “in the name of the Lord?” It means two things: 1) to do it on His behalf, and 2) to do it out of His resources.

Now think about those two aspects and apply them back to the verse. Since we are only talking about this verse in the context of how we handle suffering (and not applying this to everything else, yet) – and by the way, this is how you would fulfill Romans 12:12 when we are told to be “patient in tribulation;” we exhibit patience, not by biting our lip and toughing it out and hoping we can hold out until it passes, but by changing our attitude about the tribulation we are going through.

And how do we do that? We do that by going through it on the behalf of our Savior and the way we go through it will be out of His resources, not out of the power of our flesh.

More specifically, what it means to go through suffering on the behalf of our Savior means we see godly purpose in the suffering. What could that purpose be? It means we now we see our patient endurance of the suffering as an opportunity to:

- Put the power of God’s grace on display to the glory of God; we are demonstrating its sufficiency, just like our apostle
- Become more than a conqueror, as we defeat Satan in his realm by not succumbing to our suffering – this is real victory that has meaning!
- Encourage other believers by modeling patient endurance of our suffering
- Develop our relationship with God by employing the doctrine we know, spending time in prayer with God about our situation, and gleaning additional insights from His word regarding our suffering
- Gain practical experience which equips us to endure greater sufferings in the future

When we endure suffering “in the name of the Lord Jesus” the first thing we are doing is, we are doing it on His behalf. In other words, we are doing it for Him. And how is our suffering “for Him?” Well, it is only “for Him” if it somehow benefits Him. How in the world could our suffering benefit the Lord Jesus? It benefits Him by the things we just listed above: it puts His grace on display as sufficient for whatever comes into our lives. It benefits Him because it brings glory to God. It benefits Him when we encourage other believers because it is edifying His body. It benefits Him when we deepen our relationship in prayer and the word, as He wants a depth of relationship that is constantly deepening.

When we endure suffering “in the name of the Lord Jesus” the second thing we are doing is, we are doing it out of His resources, not ours. In other words, we, by the change in our thinking, the change in our motives, by the adoption of godly purposes in our suffering, and by our godly speech and conduct which reflect those godly purposes, we will be patiently enduring our sufferings by the life of Christ being lived in us and through us. This is the mystery of godliness. This is His resources; His life being lived in us.

And we must learn how to do this. This is not achieved by asking Jesus to come and live His life in us. It is not having “faith” that He will live His life in us. Christ living His life in us is a byproduct of Christ being formed in us. And how is Christ formed in us? By the effectual working of God’s word in our inner man, by the word of Christ dwelling in us richly.

What does it mean for the word of God to effectually work in our inner man? It means that it is transforming our soul and spirit.

And how does God’s word effectually work in us – to the transforming of our soul and spirit? It by our positive and proper response to His word – by us thinking about (in this case) our suffering from His point of view – and by our conduct which stems from that godly thinking – which is godliness, which is His life in us, which is His resources. This is what Paul means in Romans 8 when He says, “if so be that we suffer with Him.”

Everyone suffers to one degree or another, but not everyone suffers “with Him.” Suffering “with Him” refers to how you are going through the suffering. People do things, but they don’t always do it “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” We all go through sufferings, but we don’t always go through them to Christ’s benefit or out of His resources. But, that is a choice we are making every time we suffer – to do it “with Him” and “in His name” or not to.

But let’s get back to the point: our reigning with Christ is connected to our suffering with Him, but reigning is God’s design for us. So no more need to wish you had some position, you can have, but even that desire is going to be tempered by godliness. Instead of desiring to be the boss so everyone will look up to you, your desire to reign will be for the good and benefit of those you will have authority over and to the glory of the Lord Jesus who actually made this opportunity to reign a possibility.

And our response to suffering has an impact on our future reigning. Perhaps we will flesh this out in point 9 of this theodicy.

## Session 11

### 8) The Judgment Seat of Christ

Do not confuse this session as a study on the JSoC. The only reason we are discussing it is because it has a real part in our theodicy. So, to begin, let me just do a cursory review of what the JSoC is, so that anyone looking at this lesson in the future will have some context for the event.

The JSoC takes place immediately in connection with the Blessed Hope.

2 Timothy 4:1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, **who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing** and his kingdom;

The “quick and the dead” pretty much encompass everyone who is a member of the body of Christ and according to Paul, the JSoC will take place at His appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, **the righteous judge**, shall give me at **that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love **his appearing**.

The GWT judgment takes place after the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

The JSoC involves only believers, and only believers who are part of the body of Christ, and as such, is not about determining salvation.

The GWT involves the lost dead from the beginning up to that time. It is also at the GWT that millennial saints will receive their rewards.

The GWT will take place on the earth.

The JSoC will take place in the heavenly places.

The JSoC is an individualized judgment, not a corporate one.

But that is how I see the GWT too. (The difference might be with the judgment of the nations.)

Romans 14:10-13 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then **every one of us shall give account of himself** to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

The first issue is to understand who the immediate audience is. Looking at the terminology “judge thy brother,” Paul is talking to saved members of the body of Christ. As we have already discussed, the JSoC is particular to the body of Christ alone, which puts vs. 10 as pertaining to the members of the body of Christ.

Verse 12 says that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” So, who is the “us?” Again, same context, it refers to us who are members of the body of Christ.

Having established the audience, the “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess” (which is referenced in Isaiah 45:23) is pointing to each individual in the body of Christ. Carrying that same thought forward in identical language, every “one” of us shall give an account of “himself” to God. It is not, “we” (corporately) will give an account of “ourselves” (corporately).

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and **every man shall receive his own reward** according to his own labour.

“His own reward” indicates an individualized judgment.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 **Every man's** work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try **every man's** work of what sort it is. If **any man's** work abide which **he** hath built thereupon, **he** shall receive a reward. If **any man's** work shall be burned, **he** shall suffer loss: but **he himself** shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

All of the terminology indicates an individualized judgment.

The JSoC is not a punishment for sin, nor is it about imputing sin to us.

The JSoC does take reward or loss of reward into account.

The JSoC may involve uncomfortable issues, as it requires us to give an account (Rm. 14) and “receive the things done in our body, whether it be good or bad.”

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one may receive** the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, **whether it be good or bad**. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

This sounds a lot like Colossians 3, where Paul talks about masters and servants.

Colossians 3:25 But **he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done**: and there is no respect of persons.

When will we “receive for the wrong which [we] have done? No doubt, this takes place at a judgment, which for the body of Christ, will be the JSOC.

The point is, just because our sins are forgiven, does not mean there is no reckoning for them, no accounting. Evidently, there is a consequence for the “wrong” which we do. That does not mean we will lose our salvation, but there is the possibility of loss of reward.

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and **every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.** 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.** <sup>11</sup> For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; <sup>13</sup> **Every man's work shall be made manifest:** for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and **the fire shall try every man's work** of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> **If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss:** but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Notice in vs. 9, the “building” is us! We are the edifice! So, the JSOC has to do with our edification.

In vs. 10, Paul says he has laid the foundation for each of us to build ourselves upon. What is that foundation? I believe it is the foundation of the doctrine contained in his epistles.

1 Corinthians 4:4-5 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 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.

And now we come to the place where the JSOC fits into our theodicy. Three things are tucked into the end of verse 5. When the Lord comes, He will:

- 1) Bring to light the hidden things of darkness
- 2) Make manifest the counsels of the heart
- 3) Every man shall have praise of God

The JSOC will deal with the wrong or bad things which we have done. (2 Cor. 5:10, Col. 3:25) The bad things we have done are not “works.” That is not how Paul refers to them.

The JSOC will deal with the good things (the works) which we have done. Not all “good works” are created equal, and God is going to test our works to see of what sort they are. Wood, hay and



stubble are works which will not stand the test in that they are either the product of our flesh, or they were done for the wrong motive. No reward for self-righteousness.

The JSoC will determine reward, or loss of reward. This will include our position in the body of Christ and our placement in the heavenly places.

What is God doing by doing all of this? He is making us “presentable” for the Father.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, **That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

Colossians 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, **to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:**

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:**

Now remember, this judgment is taking place at the Lord’s appearing, which means there hasn’t really been any time for furthering some aspects of our education. So the “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” means that all the issues of our wrongs have been dealt with. We are, by going through the judgment, unblameable and unprovable, as there is nothing left to deal with that hasn’t already been dealt with. We are being cleaned up so that each one of us is “presentable.”

The JSoC will educate us. Everything God will do at the JSoC is for the purpose of continuing our education; actually, as far as the sin issue goes, the judgment will need to complete our education, for that needs to be a settled issue when we are presented to the Father and placed in our position in the creature.

Now, look back at the verse we were looking at earlier.

1 Corinthians 4:4-5 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 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.

The “hidden things of darkness” are those things which have been done in secret. When Paul says those things will be “brought to light” he means they will be revealed, so that all see them. Now why would God want every member of the body to see those things which were hidden? It is not because God is being vindictive or seeking to humiliate us, but this is for the education of

the whole body. A wise man is able to learn a lesson by watching what happens to someone else, it is the fool who cannot learn by other's mistakes, but has to experience it on his own.

Secondly, "make manifest the counsels of the hearts" is where our final education for sin comes in. Let me just say this in a sentence and then I will give you the reasons for it. Part of our education which needs to impact us regarding disobedience to God will be when God shows us the results of our own sin in this world, along with the results of the sins of our fellow members of the body of Christ. I believe this sober revelation of our contribution to the evil in this world will remove all doubt about the consequences of sin and rebellion. We will no longer fool ourselves into thinking that failure in the doctrine is not as benign as we thought it was.

So, what all is wrapped up in the "counsels of the heart?" When the bible uses the word "heart" it is talking about our will. This is the part of what God will make manifest that will show us how we have contributed to the evil in this world either by our sinful actions, or our lack of living out of the doctrine, because these actions were a result of our will – what we freely chose to do or not do.

If we do not recognize the full consequences of our wrong actions, we can't change our mind about sin to the degree we need to.

I realize what I have presented to you is troubling; it is to me too. So, what can we do about this? Can this be avoided? And that is the point of Paul telling us in the first place, so that we can avoid the "accounting" for the "wrong" or "bad" which we have done. Those wrong actions do not have to be revealed before all. How can we make this happen?

1 Corinthians 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

Here in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul uses this verse in the context of the Corinthian's abuse of the Lord's Table. They have treated it with carnality and each other as well. It is in this context that Paul gives us an important principle which I believe is applicable to any area of our lives, not just the Lord's Table. When it comes to our bad behavior at work, or at school, or in our own homes, with family or with our neighbors, once we are believers in Christ, if we do not judge ourselves, we will give an account to God for our actions. But, if we judge ourselves, we will not need to be judged by the Lord at the JSOC.

As I studied this issue, almost all of the commentators are in general agreement with what it means to judge ourselves. They tell us that if we confess our sins, God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness and therefore, we will not face that sin at the JSOC. We run into terminology like "keep short accounts" which means to confess your sins as soon as you are aware of them. We are admonished to pray for God to bring to our memory those sins which we failed to confess and then we can take care of those too. Then we are told that even if we fail in the same sin that we confessed before, then we simply keep confessing, asking for forgiveness so

our fellowship with God can be restored (that is, if we don't lose our salvation, as some teach) and we can once again be right with God and prepared for the JSoC.

But that is not how it works. Let's say that a guy works for a company that supplies its own gasoline for its pickup work trucks. The key to the gas pump is kept in a key box in the office. With the price of gas going up, let's say a guy uses that gas to fill up his personal car, maybe with the intention of paying the company back. But he doesn't. And, instead of stopping, he continues to fill up his personal car every week. He knows it is wrong, even though he tries to justify what he is doing. (Hey, they can afford these high gas prices better than me. I've used my car several times to do something for the company. I don't get a company truck, I have to drive my own car, so they owe me some gas.)

What does God expect?

Firstly, God does not expect the man to go through a long prayer admitting what he did was wrong and asking for forgiveness. Of course he is wrong, and he already knows it. This sin is already forgiven in Christ; paid in full by the Cross. But God expects the guy to do two things: 1) Stop stealing the company's gas, and 2) pay back what he stole.

The way to judge sin is not to confess it and then keep committing in, only to confess it again and be sorry about it, and then to do it again. No, the real issue in judging sin is to forsake it. If the guy lapses back into stealing gas again 3 months down the road, he is going to face this sin at the JSoC; that is, unless he forsakes it.

Any sin we do not have victory over in our life, we will give an account for at the judgment, because if the knowledge of that sin has not sufficiently impacted us to our forsaking of it, then our education is not over. And the JSoC is going to be the final step in that education so that when we come out of that judgment, we will have settled that issue once and for all.

And if our sin has caused loss to another, then we are responsible for restoring them. And sometimes that means suffering the consequences. For the man in our illustration, it may mean the loss of his job, if he comes clean.

He knows, if he doesn't come clean, he may wind up keeping His job if he is not caught, but that is only in this world. Whether he gets caught, or not, by his company, he will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account of what he has done – and I believe he will do that in front of the body of Christ. I believe we will all give our accounting in front of the entire body of Christ, not to embarrass us or humiliate us, but to utilize the biblical principle of the rest of the body benefitting from what they see in someone else. Why? Because God is leaving no doubt, no loophole, no exceptions and no questions in our minds that may work later on to tempt us back to sin.

The verses on this? How about one perfectly in the context of our illustration; employee/employer.

Colossians 3:22-25 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But **he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done:** and there is no respect of persons.

So if you want to know how you really feel about serving the Lord, what you do when you find yourself in this kind of situation will tell the story. Will you attempt to keep your job by not restoring the company? Will you commit another sin to cover up the first one? Or, is your conformity to Christ more important than hiding your sin?

We all know what the real answer to this dilemma is: the man should not have stolen the gas in the first place. If he does, that is a sure sign that his service to his company is not “with singleness of heart, fearing God,” it is with eyeservice” as really, his interest is in pleasing himself.

This dovetails perfectly with the education we are supposed to be getting by noticing all the evil and suffering in the world.

When we are tempted to sin, we should stop and think about it:

- What are the earthly consequences of my actions?
- What are the heavenly consequences of my actions?
- How does this reflect on my Savior?
- How does this reflect on my loved ones?
- Is this an expression of godly love? What is this an expression of?

And having gone through those questions, think about what is at the root of the temptation. What is Satan drawing on, in your life, in order to lure you in? Where is your focus, that you are even entertaining this idea? Ask yourself the question:

- Why am I thinking about doing this?

Let’s think through this for a moment. Maybe it is: “I am in a bind. Finances are tight and gas keeps going up. I am just running a little short this week, some gas would help me get to payday. I just need a little, and I don’t think they will miss it. I’m not even sure they would care.”

If you are thinking of taking it without asking it is because:

- You already know the answer would be “no”

## Theodicy

- You know they would frown on this kind of asking
- They would think less of you for not having your finances in better order

Now, if one of the above statements is true, and because of that, you have decided not to ask...

- Having identified the reason (I am short on money), how should I be thinking about this particular issue? What is a godly response to my temptation?

Since I am making up the situation, let's just keep going with it. And, by the way, this is all a very real part of our theodicy, you will see shortly. Even so, I will try to keep it brief.

First of all, please know, godliness is applicable to every area of our life, not just church. That means that God is meant to be a vital part of every part of our life. His life in us is not just for Sunday. The problem is, most people compartmentalize him away from most areas of their life because they don't know how to integrate God into their whole life.

So, God never makes it into their business. We now have "business ethics" which, once God was removed from business (and this all started years ago) the whole purpose of business changed. It used to be to benefit society as a whole, and your local community specifically, while, at the same time, providing a way for you to make a living for your family.

Now, the purposes of business are these:

- to make as much profit as possible
- To avoid customer complaints
- To avoid breaking the law

I wish I had time to talk about three types of "ologies:" theology (our understanding of God), anthropology (our understanding of people) and soteriology (our understanding of salvation) and their connection to each other and their importance for us to know about. But time will only allow me to talk about the theology part of our equation, and that, only briefly.

We are going to take our theology into the workplace. Every one has a theology. That is, everyone has some kind of an understanding about God. It may be that their theology is there is no God. And if that is what they understand, they will bring that into the workplace.

If a person does not think that God is interactively living with us, in our lives, then they will carry that theology into their workplace too.

An edified son or daughter who actively engaged in godliness, will take that theology into the workplace. That means, the tasks they undertake in their work, are to be carried out "as unto the Lord" Himself. The way they do it is supposed to be "heartily" (Col. 3:23) which means from their inner man.

And when this kind of thinking is in your mind, the temptation to steal gas is a nonstarter. See, this is the difference between working for a company for what you can get out of it, (and I am not denying that we work so we can eat, pay bills, etc.) but if that is all we are about, we will be tempted to mistreat the company. But, if we see our job as an opportunity to serve the Lord, and not just the boss we work for, and we see our job as an opportunity to work with the best interest of the company in mind, as though the company belonged to the Lord Jesus, if we thought about the company that way and conducted ourselves accordingly, we would not have stolen the gas in the first place. But that isn't how we look at work any more, even though we should.

So what can a man do? Now, I am not going to run through every possible aspect of the “gas dilemma” but let me give you a start.

If it were me, I would think about skipping my lunches over the next few days and putting that money in my gas tank. Now before you think that anybody (including a lost man) could have thought of that, let me show you the difference.

Fasting is just one of a number of spiritual disciplines that ought to be in the life of a believer. Paul does not give us a rule on fasting. There is a reason for that; it is a grace discipline which means you should be making a wise decision about fasting on your own.

For those of you who are a little further along and the idea of holiness is now coming into focus, let me just list some of these disciplines, for they come in two types:

Disciplines of abstinence: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, sacrifice

Disciplines of engagement: study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, submission

Now, these are by no means all of either category, but from the items listed you should be able to tell that disciplines of abstinence are where we “detach, unhook, and abstain for a period of time, to varying degrees from the satisfaction of the normal, appropriate desires such as food, sleep, companionship, sex, music, comfort, finance, recognition, etc. – all things which are normally part of our lives.

Now let me give you some definitions:

**Spiritual Discipline:** a repeated bodily practice, which enables us to get good at certain things in life which we cannot learn to do by direct effort.

**Habit:** an ingrained tendency to act, think or feel in a certain way without choosing to do so.

**Character:** the sum total of your habits, good and bad.

**Flesh 1:** the “meat” on your bones.

**Flesh 2:** that which can be accomplished by natural abilities. God expects that you will steer your car, push the gas or brake by your learned abilities of your flesh to drive, but how you do that in relation to other drivers on the road and the road signs, that is supposed to be done in godliness.

**Flesh 3:** this use of “flesh” refers to the sinful tendencies or habits that reside in the body, and whose nature is opposite to that of God.

When I say that we have sinful tendencies residing in our body, you should take that literally. Certain sins reside in certain members of your body.

It works that way with everything. For example, a man who plays golf, develops certain “habits” in his wrists and hips as he takes his swing. His hands hold the club in a certain way and they take on the feel of it. Done often enough, it becomes natural. And depending on how good his habits are, will dictate how well he drives the ball down the fairway.

And just as a man submits himself to a golf coach who helps him form the right habits, we “yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness” so that we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (hit the ball into the water) Just as you can cultivate “golf flesh” that allows you to hit the ball properly without overthinking it, the constant practice of sin creates its own habits, its own flesh, in the members of our bodies. And those “habits” of sin do not magically disappear when we get JUEL. We still have “sin in our members” which is the familiar and comfortable habits of sin which reside in particular members of our body.

That is what Paul was talking about when he said,

Romans 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but **sin that dwelleth in me.**

**Romans 7:23** 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.**

Okay, so let me finish this up.

It is not enough for me to skip lunch for a few days to have gas money, but how about if I now do it as an opportunity to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting? And what is fasting supposed to do for me as a member of the body of Christ?

- We are teaching our belly that it is not our God. You understand that when the bible says “their god is their belly” it means their appetites always hold sway over them; the habits of sin have not been overcome and hence, people obey the sin in their members.
- We are taking that time to focus more on disciplines of engagement. Since I am not eating a meal, how about I take that 30 minutes and focus on a spiritual discipline, or some doctrine, or prayer, or study, etc.

- We are developing the ability to have true happiness and contentment as our body makes us acutely aware that we are not getting what we want – in other words, this is a way we can practice rejoicing while suffering
- Can you fast and smile? Fast and have joy? Fast and have peace?
- We are demonstrating there is more to life than how we feel
- We are practicing self-denial – keeping our body under subjection, like Paul

Last Tuesday, my trip to Glen Rose, even though I met Tracy for supper, I chose to fast. When she asked my why I wasn't eating, I said, I was practicing the discipline of fasting to cultivate the ability to be content, and even happy, even though I wasn't going to get what I wanted – which was Mexican food.

I ended up fasting from Monday night to Wednesday afternoon. Fasting can be healthy, but that was not my only goal. My goal was to continue to practice those disciplines that will allow me to do something very important – to replace the habits of sin with the habits of righteousness – so that sin no longer has any attraction for me.

For those of you who are still awake, I just gave you an additional aspect to add to the education of evil and suffering, which will make us refuse sin in eternity. If you missed it, don't worry, I am going to spend some time on this in Major Point #10 of this theodicy.

Run the numbers of how many people at the JSoC.

- i. The calculation from crucifixion to 2020: births – 76 billion/ 5% of which is the body of Christ – 3.2 billion/ times 30 minutes per person = 1.6 billion hours = 182,648 years/ The point: We will learn an awful lot about sin and its consequences after that much judgment.

### **Addendum to session 11 (JSoC)**

It occurred to me this week that I did not finish off the JSoC properly, so let me do it now.

Firstly, we need to adjust our attitude toward the JSoC, based on this premise: God is allowing evil and suffering in this world in order to educate us about the terrible consequences of even the smallest sin and rebellion against God. If we would judge the sins in our lives by forsaking them and living out of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we will not have to face those sins at the JSoC. On the other hand, those sins which we hold onto will be dealt with at the JSoC.

Why? Because we have not yet been sufficiently impacted by the consequences of our sin to keep us from continuing in it. Seeing we will maintain our free will in eternity, if we have not settled the sin issue, God cannot turn us loose in the heavenly places.



The only thing left that can make that kind of impact on us is the JSoC. The normal reaction to the JSoC is either denial or fear. Denial is the thinking that God is not going to bring up any of our wrong doings, as they were forgiven in Christ. But that is contrary to what Paul wrote. While they are forgiven, there will still be an accounting of our behavior after we have been saved.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, **whether it be good or bad.**

Colossians 3:24-25 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But **he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done:** and there is no respect of persons.

The “fear” reaction is because we all are uncomfortable with a public review of our life. But, as I said, we need to change our attitude toward what is happening at the JSoC.

- The JSoC is not punitive in any way – it is the opportunity to makes things right between fellow members of the body of Christ
- If, as I believe, the JSoC is the final installment of our education on the sin issue, then we should want it to make the full impact on ourselves and every other member of the body of Christ – therefore we should welcome it
- We need to see the JSoC as a necessary step that our Savior puts us through, not to embarrass us or humiliate us, but because He loves us and wants us to have the benefits of it
- As the JSoC makes the impact it is designed to make, our focus on others will not be to judge them or condemn them, nor will it be to excuse them but it will be the godly response of encouraging them and wanting God’s best for them – of wanting the JSoC to impact them as it does us
- Start looking at the JSoC as our opportunity: to wipe our whole slate clean and go into eternity with a clear conscience – nothing that hasn’t been accounted for, nothing to condemn us. Think of Romans 8:33-34

Romans 8:33-34 **Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is** God that justifieth. **Who is he that condemneth? It is** Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

If there is a provision for us to be without charge or condemnation while we are justified here on this earth, then we must have a way to presented in eternity without blemish, or charge or condemnation. The whole purpose of judgment is so that we are condemned.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, **that we should not be condemned with the world.**

- Start looking at the JSoC as our education: to settle once and for all the sin question, so that we will freely choose to refuse sin forever

## **Theodicy: Session 12 – What Will Eternity be Like?**

What is waiting for us? There are a lot of erroneous ideas floating around.

- Some version of sitting on clouds strumming harps
- A constant repetition of casting our crowns at Jesus' feet
- A non-stop "praise and worship" service
- A sterile, boring existence with nothing to do

No wonder people do not long for eternity. No wonder they love this world and their life in it. No wonder larger and larger numbers of people just do not want to go to heaven.

Not only are there many erroneous and unappealing ideas of heaven floating around, but there are worldviews which actually oppose any idea of an afterlife.

Today, in the western world, there are three main worldviews. Two of these are what we call "secular" worldviews. The first one is scientific naturalism, which basically says the physical world is all there is, the only legitimate forms of knowledge are the hard sciences, and we can only know what is true by that which we can tested by science in the laboratory and observed through our five senses.

By that standard, eternity in the heavenly places is not real because it cannot be tested with the five senses or in the lab. To the naturalist, theology is not a legitimate area of knowledge because he thinks everything (like the existence of God) is only believed on the basis of faith, even though that is not true. Also, to these folks, the idea of life in eternity is foolish.

A scientific naturalist says that if an idea cannot be tested in the laboratory, then that idea is just an opinion and cannot be judged to be true or untrue. But that statement is self-defeating. By self-defeating I mean that the statement disproves itself, for that assertion cannot be proven in the laboratory, which by its own assertion, makes it untrue.

The second secular worldview is postmodern relativism. This one also ascribes to only the physical world is what is real. This one says there are no moral absolutes and no such thing as a morality that is true for everyone. That is, good and bad are basically up to the individual or dictated by the norms of a society. The end result being that what is right for you, may not necessarily be right for me, and what is wrong for you, is not necessarily wrong for me. There are no moral absolutes. Every society gets to decide what is right or wrong. The postmodern relativists agree with the scientific relativists that the idea of eternity, life after death or place called heaven is nothing more than the foolish thinking of people of faith.

By the way, if you are ever in this kind of conversation and you are asked to prove there are moral absolutes, do not take on that burden of proof, as moral absolutes are self-evident. Make them assume the burden of proof. I do not have to prove that torturing and killing babies is

morally wrong, everyone already knows it is wrong because it is self-evident. Everyone knows that kindness is a virtue and not a vice, and that we should treat other people with kindness. Denying moral absolutes is an excuse to live an immoral lifestyle while trying to avoid the stigma of bad behavior.

The third, and only non-secular worldview that prevails in the western culture today is ethical, monotheism. According to this worldview, there is a transcendent, immaterial God, who made us in His image, and has given us a moral law through both creation and scripture, and we owe our allegiance to that God.

While I am glad that this worldview holds some sway, the problem is that for centuries, we have had lots of writing on the major doctrinal issues and even eschatology, but very little on what life will like for us in eternity in heaven.

And on that note, let's make our first correction. As members of the body of Christ, the central sphere of our existence will be, not in the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven (which is where most people think of spending eternity), and not on the earth (which is what you get when you misapply Israel's prophetic program to the body of Christ), but the main sphere of our activities will be in the 2<sup>nd</sup> heaven.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> heaven is the created universe; the heavenly places. We find that Christ, as the head of the body, is seated there.

Ephesians 1:19-21 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places***, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Then, in Ephesians 2, we find that we will be seated in those heavenly places with Him.

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath **raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in **Christ Jesus****: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

The phrase "sit together" actually refers to the work area of our lives in eternity. The "sit together" has to do with us reigning with Christ. We will talk more about this in a bit. The point we are after right now is to establish the fact that the main realm of our life in eternity will be in the heavenly places.

So what will that life be like?

## Theodicy

There are two main views of what eternity will be like:

<b><u>Theocentric</u></b>	<b><u>Kingdom-centric</u></b>
God	God and God's People
Glory of God	God's perfect society
Mode of life: worship	Worship and fellowship
Atmosphere: holiness	Justice and peace
Gathered for worship	Social engagement
Family eliminated	Family perfected
Fellowship diminished	Fellowship emphasized
Location: 3 <sup>rd</sup> heaven	New heavens, new earth
Spiritual existence	Embodied existence

Both of these views have a long list of defenders and detractors.

The criticism of the theocentric view is that it is nothing more than one long eternal Sunday morning service of singing, sermon and more singing.

The criticism of the kingdom-centric view is that there is too much emphasis on the social aspect of heaven, "Who wants a parade and a barbeque every day?"

I believe the truth lies somewhere in the middle and I think we can find that balance in our Bible.

Probably because of these two views, we have two kinds of people who will make it into eternity. The easy way to distinguish between them is to say one side is marked by "loving God" and the other side is marked by "loving others." Again, the Bible calls for both.

A.W. Tozer is an example of the people who think heaven is theocentric. Martin Luther is an example of someone who thinks the kingdom-centric view is correct. Unless you know something about these two men, this example will not mean much to you. Tozer is the straight-laced, no nonsense guy. Luther, if you know much about him, was the more "fly by the seat of your pants" kind of guy. The Christian world has benefitted from both.

Truth be told, in eternity, the *Tozers* are going to need to lighten up a bit, and the *Luthers* are going to need to clean their act up a bit because these represent opposite ends of the spectrum.

So, how would we describe that “middle ground” of what eternity is really going to be like? We can know something about how to answer that question by virtue of the fact that we are going to have a body in eternity.

While our soul is perfectly capable of seeing, hearing, thinking and remembering, God has chosen to give us a glorified body like the resurrection body of His Son. The main reason to have a body is so that we can interact with the physical world.

So, do not think about your new body as non-physical; it is precisely physical and spiritual at the same time. For example, after His resurrection, many touched the body of Jesus and felt it. They saw the scars in his hands from the Cross. And yet, that body was able to walk through walls as it was not limited like the bodies we have now.

So, here is the first thing – our body is going to be very different. For those who are older, what I am about to say will have meaning. Our new bodies will not. Our new bodies will not: get sick, grow old, experience pain, contract disease or be injured.

At the same time, our new bodies will. Will what? Our new bodies will function perfectly in environments that would kill this body. Outer space, under water, extremes of heat and cold will have no effect on our new bodies. Our new bodies will move faster than anything you can imagine, faster than light.

For example, the next nearest star to our sun is alpha centauri. It is 4.3 light years away. Light travels at 186,282 miles per second. That means it takes light from the sun about 8 ½ minutes to travel to the earth. Now, how large is the universe?

According to those who monitor the Hubble telescope, “All in all, Hubble reveals an estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe or so, but this number is likely to increase to about 200 billion as telescope technology in space improves.”

When you consider how large the spaces are between stars, and how much larger the spaces are between galaxies, we can understand that the cosmos is very large.

Yet, Jesus ascended to His Father in the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven and was back a short time later.

John 20:11-17 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said,

she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, **Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:** but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

Notice that Jesus told her not to touch Him for He had not yet ascended to His Father, and yet, just a short time later, Jesus allowed others to touch Him.

Matthew 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And **they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.**

How is it they could do this when He forbade Mary? It has been suggested that the ascension Jesus referred to when talking to Mary was not the one which took place 40 days after His resurrection, but was to happen immediately following His resurrection, to sprinkle His own blood on the mercy seat in heaven, functioning as a high priest.

*By the way, if Jesus was referring to the ascension 40 days later, Mary would not be able to touch him at all, for He would be gone back to the Father. In which case, He would just say, "don't touch me."*

During this part of the ceremony, the high priest could not be defiled until he had finished. One of the ways in which he could be defiled was to be touched by that which was considered to be unclean or unholy. Mary could not touch Him because He had not yet ascended to do that High Priestly work, but those who saw Him shortly after were able to hold His feet because He had performed that task and returned.

Hebrews 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**

This is the holy place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven.

Hebrews 9:23-25 **It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;** but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For **Christ is not entered into the holy places** made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but **into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

## Theodicy

If I am right about this, then Jesus would have traveled all the way to the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven, as High Priest, put His blood on the mercy seat to complete the redemption, then traveled back to the earth where, as Matthew records, “they held Him by the feet.” Mt. 28:9.

The only way Jesus could have traveled that far in such a short time is for Him to be able to move faster than the speed of light. Some have suggested that our new bodies will move at the speed of thought.



## Session 13: What Eternity is Like

### 4) The glory of what is waiting for us

#### a. Most people have no concept of eternal glory

i. 2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with **eternal glory**.  
11 *It is* a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: 12 If we suffer, we shall also **reign with him**: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

ii. The glory that awaits us in eternity is more wonderous and exciting than most people ever imagine.

iii. It contains events, places and experiences that will bring your life in eternity to its very zenith; it will be the epitome of purpose of life

#### b. For most people, eternity is the P.S. of the Christian life

i. While we talk about “eternal life,” sermons are mostly about the things of this life (better marriages, how to communicate better, etc.), while we hear almost nothing about life in the ages to come; the main point of the Cross is found in our eternity, not in our life on this earth – eternity is the end game, not our life here and now.

c. People think heaven is going to be boring or tedious, and as such, they really don't want to go; they love this present world and much of the reason why is because they do not know what is waiting on them there

d. What is it going to be like in eternity? In order to know what it will be like in eternity, we need to know something about the kind of being we are, and to do that we have to talk about the soul.

i. Our soul is who we are; your soul is the real you. A soul is made up of three parts: mind, will and emotion. Therefore, our soul, the real us, is immaterial. We are, at our essence, a non-physical beings. But God did not mean for us to live in that condition, He put our soul into a physical body. Why? So we could interact with the physical world. If we were just a soul, while we could think and have consciousness, we would not be able to interact with the physical world or experience life in it. Here is the next thing: our soul animates our body. A body without a soul is a corpse. But when our soul joins up with our body, that connection allows us to experience, through our senses, the physical world in ways we could not if we were just a soul. By its nature, a soul is everlasting. A soul is eternal in the sense that, as an immaterial being, it does not age, wear out, get tired, or get sick. It cannot be injured in the sense that its function is impaired, and it cannot be killed. This is why everyone is going to live forever, it is just a question of where.

As an aside, animals have a soul and to the extent that they possess consciousness, they too are eternal beings which means that we at least have to entertain the notion of eternity for them either through resurrection (perhaps in connection with the new earth) or some kind of eternity. Just to say it, the animals were affected by the fall through no fault of their own, but suffered under Adam's federal headship. If we believe the Lord God will restore that which was affected by original sin, then He will provide for certain of the animals too. And since this is a theodicy, which is an accounting for suffering and evil, may I say that the animal kingdom has also suffered and experienced both natural evil and moral evil, not counting the violence inherent in that kingdom. Therefore, God will also address this issue for those animals who possess sufficient consciousness, for they are not just a body (like plants) but possess a soul. (I have my own thoughts about how God is going to rectify the problems in the animal world, but I will reserve my comments to what I have said so far.) Now, why are we talking about the soul? Because once you know what you are (an eternal, immaterial being of a soul), you have to wonder why God would put you in a body in order to live your life. After all, a soul does not require a body to think, communicate, reason, see, hear, feel, etc. All of these senses are said to be experienced by those who no longer have a corporeal body, while their soul is in hell. But there is a difference in the way those sensations are perceived by the bodiless soul and the way they are experienced in an ensouled body. But the point I am after is this: even in eternity, throughout the ages to come, God has not left us as just a soul, but again puts us into a body, but this time it will be a glorious, body like the resurrection body of Jesus Christ. Like our soul, this body will not get old, sick, tired, distressed, injured, or killed. It will function perfectly in the creature without a space suit or an oxygen tank. It will move literally at the speed of thought. Once we are completely conformed to the image of God's Son, we will get a body that is a perfect match for our soul. I used to think the reason we will receive a glorified body is because this body cannot function in the heavenly places, but really, we don't need a body to "reign with Christ" in the heavenlies. We could do that perfectly well as souls.

- ii. God giving us a physical body tells us some things:
  - 1. Our physical, glorified body tells us to get ready for a physical life in eternity! It tells us that God means for us to be **experiencing life in a physical realm**. God intends for us to live in a physical "world" (if you get my meaning of "world").

A dad doesn't buy a baseball and two gloves unless he is planning on playing catch with someone. The reason you put on a coat is because you are anticipating cold temperatures when you go outside. We don't take our kids to the skating rink unless we intend for them to skate. Rocket science, right? Well, why give us a physical body unless God intends for us to interact, in all the ways we are already used to, in a physical creation?

Why give us the feelings that a physical body enjoys in the first place? When we realize that it is God who built in all those senses that produce more than just data of the sense itself, but it includes a range of emotions and feelings which are all produced in a moment of time, He did that for our pleasure. When God created our physical bodies, it was for our enjoyment of the physical world.

But when sin came into the world, unfortunately, those same bodies would feel the physical, mental and emotional pains and sufferings too. But God is going to fix that.

In eternity, our bodies will never have a single day of aches and pains, never experience heartbreak and sadness, never be sick, never feel depression or anxiety, never grow old and never die. We only get the good stuff!

But don't miss the point, the ability to experience life in a body all comes from God and His desire to give us the best life possible in every area of life.

Our soul does not need a body to survive, even in the heavenly places, but it is our body that allows our soul to interact with the physical world in real, physical ways; ways which a soul, by itself, could not experience. So, what else does having a physical body tell us?

2. It tells us that we **are going to do more than rule and reign; that work will only be a part of our life.**

How can we deduce this? We know work will be our godly labor, and that we will engage in work, but we can deduce that there will more to our lives than just reigning with Christ because we do not need a body to make godly judgments; to work. Our soul is perfectly capable of reasoning, remembering our education, and making godly decisions.

From that I deduce a couple of things: 1) the work that we are going to be engaged in may require a physical body, or 2) God intends for us to do more than just work. In my mind, both of these may be true. You will work, but **you will also have a life.**

3. If we have a body, it is for the purpose of enjoying bodily pleasures and experiencing physical activities.

For example, a warm soup after being outside on a cold morning is called a “comfort food.” And the comfort of that warm soup is more than just a temperature change, but it actually sets a mood that really is quite comforting.

Another example: Have you ever experienced something so wonderful that it just takes your breath away? I have. Like when Billie would cup her hand around my face, with her soft, feminine touch, I can hardly describe the feeling and the effect it had on me. But here is what I know, it was God who put the ability to experience that in me.

If you have ever stood in awe of some scene of beauty, it was God who allowed your whole being to be affected by what your eyes saw. And it wasn’t just data processed by your brain, it actually affected you emotionally or in some other way that is hard to explain until you have experienced it, but it was God who designed that whole experience from the object you saw to the effect it had on you. I believe He means for us to experience that again in our glorified bodies!

When your kids are little and they crawl up in your lap and you wrap your arms around them and feel them in your embrace, and your heart swells with love for them and all they mean to you, it was God who designed all that.

When a certain smell reminds you of someone or some place, and it immediately produces feelings that are pleasant to you, and seems to transport you back to something in your past that was wonderful, every part of your being resonates with that moment. For a moment, it is like you are re-living it and the good feeling associated with that floods your whole being. God designed that and that is what a body can do in a physical world.

With just a soul, the five senses are there, but they are not able to translate into the physical world without a brain, a central nervous system and a body.

- iii. But what else does having a body imply? It implies that you will have a place to live; a domicile, a home. So let’s talk about this for a moment. When Jesus was on earth, where did He spend the night? I am talking about when He began His public ministry, where did Jesus reside?

Matthew 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The **foxes have holes**, and the **birds of the air have nests**; but **the Son of man hath not where to lay his head**.

I believe Jesus stayed with friends. This was a way for Him to minister to them and for them to get to know Him. I do not think Jesus was some guy who lived out in the woods with no roof over His head when it was pouring down rain. I can't imagine Peter going back to his home while knowing the Lord was going to spend the night like a vagrant under some makeshift cover. I think Jesus spent the night with all of them at one time or another. My point in this is that He stayed in someone's house. He didn't own one, but His friends did, and He stayed with them.

But please also notice that Jesus said that even the birds and the foxes have a domicile, a place to call their home. Now, if we were just a soul, you would not need a house, for it would serve no purpose. But we will have a body and that physical body will have a physical house. (Hey, in the kingdom, the Father is going to have a house – “in my Father's house are many mansions...”). Not only that, but “houses and lands” were part of the reward for the little flock in the kingdom.

Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, **shall receive an hundredfold**, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Mark 10:28-30 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.

In Imperial, we have a long, covered porch on the front of our house. I can't tell you how much fellowship has taken place on that porch, how much Bible has been discussed, how many questions have been asked and answered, how many friendships were formed and deepened. Do you think that you will never have that in eternity, if you want it? Do you actually think that life on this earth is going to be, in any way, better or more enjoyable than it will be throughout the ages to come? Well, it won't. If you want a porch in eternity, you can have it. If want folks to come over, they will. If you enjoy fellowship, you can. I can hear someone saying, this is crazy, you won't need a porch in eternity. Well,

Jesus didn't need fish in his resurrection body either, but He ate it! (See John 21)

I am sure that some things that we think are important to us now may not be so important later on, as we see them compared to other things we previously did not know about.

But just as likely, some of the things that are important to us now, will become even more important as they take on a godly aspect and purpose. For example, most people enjoy getting together with family and friends, and on holidays like July 4<sup>th</sup>, in this country, people get together and eat a meal and spend time with each other. Usually, unless a person is tuned in to godliness, there is no purpose other than "getting together."

But in eternity, fellowship will have godly purpose behind it that will be beneficial to us, to those we fellowship with, and it will be glorifying to our Savior. It will achieve the purpose of meeting other members of the body of Christ and deepening relationships we have with those we already know.

It will be part of the creative aspect that we will employ in eternity, both in our lives and in our work. I really wish I had more time to talk about this aspect but let me just say that the way in which God created us, lends us to being creators. No, we will never be like God is the Creator, but He does mean for His sons and daughters to use their faculties to bring about useful and inventive ideas, processes, and inventions. This is actually going to take up more of our time and effort in eternity than you might think, and it is going to be wonderfully fascinating for us to do, and to hear about from others the things they are involved in.

Think about a project that the Lord Jesus has put into your hands to get done. He has explained what He is after so that you are thinking about this project like He is thinking about it. Not only is He putting this in your hands, He is letting you pick the members of the body that will work on it with you.

Can you imagine sitting with Paul and hearing him talk about things that are yet ahead for the ages to come? And what if he is asking you to assist him on his team – how great that would be!

I know it seems like we have gotten off point about sitting on the front porch of our home fellowshiping, but I am telling you that our fellowship will have multiple godly purposes.

A person without purpose is miserable and in eternity, there will be no lack of purpose for any of us, and because I believe the home (family and fellowship) are going to be perfected, there will be no lack of purpose for any member of the body of Christ. We will not be overwhelmed by our purposes, but we will never be without purpose either.

A house may be a shelter, but a home is something more.

It is a place:

1. of community (where we learn to recognize our part within the function of the whole),
2. of love (not just for our family but for those outside our family), as we find creative ways to communicate our love to them
3. of ministry (to the community at large), and in eternity to the body of Christ and also to those who are living on the earth
4. of preparation (for work, for example),
5. of respite (from the official work we do; the purposeful stepping away from work for the purpose of attending to other matters and sharpening ourselves for return to work),
6. of learning (education, how to work as a unit), and
7. of hospitality (opportunities of ministry)

Someone may take issue with these, like respite. They might say, and rightly so, our glorified bodies won't need to rest, so respite is not an issue. But can I point out, that is exactly what God did at the end of each day of creation and especially at the end of the week.

Genesis 2:2-3 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and **he rested on the seventh day from all his work** which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it **he had rested from all his work** which God created and made.

Now I can hear an objection: God wasn't resting because He was worn out, it just means He stopped creating. I don't disagree with that. But let me ask a couple of questions, "Could God have created everything in a single day?" If He could, then He obviously took a respite between the various parts of His creation work. That is to say that He purposefully stepped away from His work, in order to continue it the next day. Secondly, "If God "rested" on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, which means that He stopped working on the creation, it is so unlikely that we will also have a time each day that we "stop work" too?" I mean we do that now. And what do we say about the guy who never stops working to attend to the other important things in his life? His work does not excuse his neglect of other important matters.

Now, if you believe that all you will be doing is sitting on a throne and making judgments of one sort or another, then what I am saying does not sound right, I get it. And while work in the heavenly places will be very different from work on the earth, I do not think God created us to be

nothing more than a hive of worker bees in the heavenly places who, like the programmed Borg, have nothing in mind but work.

Again, I know that work there will be different, and just to state it briefly, the work we do there will be the greatest privilege of our lives. I believe we will absolutely love what we will do, but that does not make me think that it is all we will ever do. I love what I do now, and I think that I will love my work in the heavenlies even more, but if our work is all there is, we don't need a body to do that.

And I believe that in eternity, our lives will need to be in balance for work alone is not all God intends.



## Session 14: What Eternity is Like

Some of the things you will hear are deduced from other Scriptural principles. That means that for some of the things I am saying, there are no verses that outright state these things, but we can be reasonably sure about some of them, depending on how accurate our thesis statement is.

For example, in today's lesson, I am going to talk to you about some things I believe will take place in eternity and which will make up our lives: fellowship, friendships, treatment of old adversaries, personal liberty, personal interests, the glory of God, and the homegoing for the saints. With each of these I will give the deductive or inductive reasoning behind them from the word of God, and I may illustrate it by some speculation on my part. The speculation is so that you get the gist of my point, but I do not mean to say that it will be necessarily true in all its particulars.

- iv. **You will fellowship.** Why do I say we will fellowship? The Bible does not outright declare that we will do this.

First of all, we are called to the "fellowship of Jesus Christ" which I take to involve every member of the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:7-9 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom **ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

I do not think that fellowship will be dissolved at the Blessed Hope, but rather it will be perfected. The fact that we are members of the same body in eternity implies a fellowship which will continue. Therefore, I see fellowship as continuing. Because the Lord Jesus ate in His resurrection body, and because much of what He said in describing the kingdom involved meals (for Israel's program) there is an implication that our fellowship may include meals, even though it may not have to.

Because fellowship will be perfected in eternity, I believe we will experience true fellowship. Why? Because I believe that in eternity, our fellowship will have godly purpose which will make it more fulfilling and beneficial for us, and for those we fellowship with than it ever was on earth. In the body of Christ, I believe fellowship will be perfected, so we can finally experience it the way God designed it to be experienced.

So, what will our fellowship be about? It will be about that which we have in common. That is what is at the root of fellowship. We will fellowship about what has been and is happening to us. Why? Because our fellow members are not omniscient and communication is essential. We will fellowship about the greatness of God's grace which made all this possible, and about the Lord Jesus Christ (much more about this one later). We will fellowship about the work we are doing,

(why wouldn't we?) We will fellowship about the things we are discovering and learning. We will fellowship about the things we have seen as we work throughout the creation (your friends and family don't have omniscience, so you will have to tell them what you have seen, just like nowadays!).

But my point is that fellowship has a godly purpose which will be fulfilled in eternity. It won't be fake fellowship, it will be real. That fellowship will continue to create a bond between you and the other members of the body of Christ, so that your love for them will continue to deepen and abound. Your appreciation for their labor will grow. You will see them as an important and integral part of the body and you will rejoice in their doing their job well.

And this does not even talk about the fellowship which we will have with our Father and His Son.

**v. You will make new friends.** Why do I think this?

Firstly, because we will continue to come to information in the way we always have. I do not think we will automatically know every member of the body of Christ. Having the mind of Christ is not the equivalence of omniscience. And how will you get to know the other members of the body of Christ? The same way you do now, by spending time with them. By talking with them. (If you recall the thought experiment we did on the JSoC, you will have billions of fellow saints to get to know.) If this is true then it tells us something; that there will be a time in which this meeting and getting to know our fellow members will be accomplished. In other words, this will be on our "to do" list. And while it may be fun for some of us to meet new people, this is godly purpose behind this.

Now, why do I think this? Because, as scriptures that describe the afterlife indicate, we will retain our memories from our life on earth, therefore we will recall our friends and family. They will mean something to us beyond merely our earthly connections because, as members of the same body, our friendships will be perfected, not done away with. Our work in the body with other members necessitates that we have knowledge of each other. We do not just focus on ourselves, we but we learn the value of every other member. Our "value and esteeming" of the other members is not made up; it not just something we say. It needs to be a living reality with us; it needs to come out of knowledge of our fellow members so that it is genuine.

Imagine working with some fellow members of the body you do not know. You would introduce yourself and ask them about themselves. They may just be folks, but from back in Paul's day. What about talking to Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquilla, or Paul himself? You will have an eternity to get to know and develop relationships with people from the time of Paul to the Blessed Hope.

**vi. What will we do about the people we knew on earth that we did not get along with?**

The people you loved the most, you will continue to love in eternity. Family and friends will continue to be among the people you love the most as eternity starts.

But what about people we did not like or get along with? First of all, a lot of that is going to be taken care of at the JSoC. There is going to be some apologizing and making things right – a lot of it. But after the JSoC, you are going to engage in an education whereby the people you had the most trouble with, will be viewed by you as important fellow members of the body. You will value and esteem them as such and you will act toward them with godly love and charity. Old animosities will have been done away with and you will no longer feel about them the way you used to, nor they you.

But that does not mean that you will love everyone the exact same or to the same exact degree. You won't. Your love for everyone will increase throughout the ages to come. Not only will you love your loved ones more than you did on earth, but you will form new friendships with people you never met before and you may find people who will become closer and closer friends as the ages pass. And don't be surprised that you form a very close friendship with someone you did not like at all on earth. In eternity, friendships will take on the role that God intended for them to take, and we will constantly be working on our relationships with our fellow members.

**vii. You will see whatever you would like to see and go wherever you would like to go.** The freedom and liberty you will enjoy in eternity will be unmatched by anything you ever had before.

Why do I say this? I deduce this from a couple of principles that form our sonship status. Firstly, we are already being treated like adult sons and daughters, not children who need to have limited freedoms and limited decision making. I cannot imagine that we will have less liberty in eternity than we have now. In eternity, our freedoms and liberties will be that of adults, tempered and constrained by godly love for our fellow saints.

Secondly, the heavenly places is our domain; it is the main sphere of our operation. It makes sense that our liberty would be greatest in the area of our function.

When I say you can go wherever you want to go, understand that our going will not be governed by the frivolous reasons that guided so many actions on earth. To say it more precisely, a lot of what we wanted to do on earth and why we wanted to do it will change for us once we get into eternity. But other aspects will remain the same. For example, curiosity will be part of what continues to drive us in eternity. This is part of what will keep things from getting "old" and "boring."

I realize what I am suggesting here is different from some, like Thomas Aquinas, who taught that “Heaven is a place of motionless absorption with an intellectual contemplation of God.” In my defense, consider the earthly ministry of Lord Jesus. I believe He was here, not on vacation, but on an express mission for His Father. I think all of His actions were weighed and careful and not frivolous. Yet, in His life, we worked in a carpenter shop, walked the countryside, fished, sailed, met people, talked, taught, ate – all in connection with His life’s work. Even after His resurrection, He moved from place to place, connecting with His disciples and continuing His work until His ascension. With that in mind, I can see us working in the heavenly places by doing a lot things, by experiencing a lot of life, all for the glory of God and the furtherance of His purposes. What I am saying here is that doing the kinds of things I have been talking about are not antithetical to godliness and service to God.

So, can we journey to the ends of the creation? I think we can and we will. I also think that it will not be merely for entertainment purposes, as we won’t be bored and “need a break.” But that does not mean that we won’t enjoy our liberty. I believe that the things we do in eternity will be enjoyable and interesting to us, and sometimes even awe-inspiring. Does the bible say this? It does not. But I think that is because the things that will be revealed in the progressive ages to come are talked about very, very little. In fact, only that there will be ages to come. But we have no description of all that will take place in them. So, while some of the details are speculation, there are principles which are true for us, from which, we can gain some degree of insight of what life will be like for us.

I think there will be, as the various ages unfold, things which we will experience and see and hear that will continue to astound us. And at the same time, the use of our liberty will not just be for personal pleasure, although I believe our liberty will be a pleasure to us, but it will also be to the benefit of others. Why do I say this? Because the creature itself is waiting to be delivered into our liberty which is going to be a great benefit to it.

Romans 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Our liberty will not be inappropriately used in eternity, just as we were learning here.

1 Corinthians 8:9 But **take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock** to them that are weak.

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only **use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.**

What is the point of learning to properly exercise our liberty in Christ if, in eternity, God will just magically make it happen. Like everything else, wherever we are in our sonship life when we

exit this life, is where we will take up in eternity. Therefore, I see our liberty continuing, for as Paul said:

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

I have no reason to think this is going to change in eternity. We will continue to govern our liberty by the continuing education we will receive in eternity.

It is at this point that I want to make another assertion about the presence of God. Some have the idea that God is going to be overwhelmingly present in eternity, but I do not think that is how it will constantly be. The manifest presence of God in eternity will be in the New Jerusalem on the earth. Yes, He will always be omnipresent, but I do not think in the sense that many picture it. I think we will have all facets of God's presence, at some time or another. That is not to say that you can't go see Him or be around Him, of course you can. In fact, I think we will have times when it feels like we are operating on our own and times when we are in the very presence of God. Just as there will be times when we are working, more or less, independently, and other times when we will work with many other members of the body or angels.

## Session 15

### viii. **If you have an interest, I believe you will be able to indulge that interest throughout eternity.**

This is another one of those things that may well change once you get there. I have heard guys who like bass fishing talk about just bass fishing all day, every day in heaven, and every bass is a trophy, etc. (My dad and I used to go fishing.) But once you see what all is up there and what we can spend our time doing, things like bass fishing are going to lose their appeal. Fishing for the sake of fishing, or fishing for the sake of diversion, or fishing for sport or for the biggest fish, is going to be a poor way of achieving what we would really be doing if we were fishing. I am not saying that no one can fish, but if you do, it will be for different purposes than before.

Plus, there may be other areas of interest that you have which you will be able to pursue in eternity and they will have genuine meaning and purpose behind them.

Conjecture: Just to put some detail to this, let me lay out a scenario for us. Sarita Behm is a part of this assembly. I have known Sarita since before she and Mark were married, and they have been married for 30 years. Sarita has a real interest in horses. You could say, Sarita loves horses.

In eternity, Sarita may have an opportunity, if she is still interested, to be around and work with horses. Now, what may initially draw her to them is her remembrance of her earthly love for horses, but in eternity, the reasons and purposes for her involvement with horses will go beyond merely liking horses, or enjoying riding.

Before I go any further, let's establish some principles upon which I am basing this. Ever before the creation, animals (horses included) were in heaven. Horses were also part of the earthly creation of the animal kingdom. So, the first principle: There are horses in heaven and horses on the earth and there will be horses in eternity.

Because of their natures and purposes, certain animals not only carried some very profound purposes as part of God's creation, and as such, were valuable to man, but it therefore became man's responsibility to care for, protect, and train these kinds of animals. These are all part of the dominion concept that was given to man over the earth and other creatures and this is the second principle I am basing things on. So, understand what is being said here: I am referring to the dominion concept...

Genesis 1:27-28 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.** (which would include horses)

From this dominion concept I am saying that man has some responsibilities toward that over which he has dominion. If he is told to “dress and keep” the garden over which he has dominion, then it stands to reason that man has similar responsibilities toward the animals over which he is given dominion. In the specific scope of our discussion, it would mean that mankind has some level of responsibility towards the horses.

Third principle: We are told in Romans that there are two ways in which God’s glory is made known to men; the first is by the creation...

Romans 1:19-20 Because **that which may be known of God** is manifest in them; for **God hath shewed it unto them**. For the invisible things of him **from the creation** of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

The second way that God’s glory is known to men is by the scriptures; the word of God. While the scriptures is the more detailed and explicit way in which God’s glory is seen, it still remains that the creation reveals aspects of the glory of God. For example:

Psalms 19:1 **The heavens declare the glory of God**; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

Psalms 97:6 **The heavens declare his righteousness**, and all **the people see his glory**.

So, our third principle is that the creation declares the glory of God directly, and it declares His righteousness which indirectly manifest His glory. In both ways, directly and indirectly, the creation reveals God’s glory.

Now, let me take these principles and extrapolate from them.

- If the heavens of now declare God’s glory, I believe the new heavens, containing a functioning creature, will reveal even more of God’s glory – If it does, then God would want it to be made manifest
- The creatures of God’s creation, including horses, will continue in the new heaven and the new earth in eternity
- In eternity, man will continue to have a responsibility toward certain of God’s creatures (such as horses) which means someone will have to care for them, train them, etc.
- Sarita may well be one who will take up this task of caring for horses

But, because I believe that our involvement in any task in eternity goes beyond the initial likes or pleasures of it, then someone like Sarita will, as eternity moves on through the various ages, begin to understand the particular glory of God that is revealed in the horse. I am talking about going beyond the things we already understand that there is a degree of majesty with a horse, for

example: when Jesus comes at His advent, He comes how? He comes riding on a white horse! That evokes a picture in our minds that includes majesty and kingship and other things.

But what if our continual education as sons and daughters equips us to see heretofore unseen depths of God's glory in all the various aspects of God's creation, and aspects of God's glory in the creation of the horse in particular? We know that a horse has a very particular shape and build, but do we see the particular glory of God vested in that shape? Do we see more than just the strength of a horse, but the glory of God in its strength? In its endurance? In its speed? In the measure of its gait? What about the mane and tail?

See, I believe there are hidden aspects of God's glory in every area of creation because we don't yet possess the ability to see it in its fulness. But I think one day, Sarita, in ages of being with horses and furthering her education may begin to recognize aspects of God's glory in the creation of the horse that no human has ever identified before. And as her education informs her understanding of things not yet discovered, she may write it all down in a book. Perhaps she will call the book, *"The Glory of God revealed in the Horse."*

Now yes, I am speculating, but I am doing so based on three principles in God's word. And supposing that Sarita writes that book on God's Glory in the Horse, the saints that compose the body of Christ will have an opportunity to read that book and gain insights into the glory of God in just the creation of the horse.

Of course, I could be wrong. Maybe God did not design the horse in a specific way, but it was random. Or suppose He did design the horse, but there is no glory to be seen in it. Only some parts of the creation point to His glory, but not the horse. Or, there is glory in the horse that we will never see. But I believe God wants the glory in all of His creation seen. But maybe I am carrying the perceived glory of God too far. But what if I am not?

Perhaps Sarita will lecture on God's glory as it relates to the creation of the horse. Maybe her book will be published on the earth so that those people will begin to look at horses not as creatures unto themselves, but as a magnificent representation of the glory of God. But again, maybe I am wrong. Maybe no books will be written in eternity.

What am I saying? I am saying that books in eternity, if they are written, will be rightly written, as they will accomplish more than just entertainment. They will no longer need to point to a fictional utopia, for we will be living in it!

But the books which have yet to be written will continue to educate, inform, and edify others by revealing aspects of the greatness, grandeur and glory of God which we have not yet come to know and understand. This is part of the creativity that is built into us as those made in the image of God, and there is the fourth principle. So, yes, I think as far as human literature goes, the most important books, the most advanced books have yet to be written.



You see, I do not think the books which men have written on all kinds of subjects, but which omitted God, are the final books which will be written. And honestly, maybe I am wrong, but if God's glory is manifest in every aspect of His creation, then I think there will be an order to how we learn about it (progressive, like any education), I think God wants that glory to be known, and He will either make it known by the natural process of what will take place with us in eternity, or He will just open us our heads and pour all that knowledge in all of us all at once. And I don't see any evidence for the latter.

And just think how it would change our experience in the heavens if we come to these various truths one by one throughout eternity! When you see things, it won't be, "Oh, I already know about that," but it will be "Oh my! Look at that! That is glorious!" Bit of a difference, isn't it?

When we look up at the night sky and think, "the heavens declare the glory of God," right now, I think our understanding of that glory is shallow. We think, wow, the universe is big and that points to God's glory, or we understand the story of the constellations and we think that is God's glory, and both of those are, but I do not think they are even the hem of the garment of what we will learn about God's glory in the heavens.

You see, men in this world have worked really hard to separate God from the sciences; chemistry, cosmology, physics, geology, micro-biology, you name it. But all of the sciences have their roots in God and no proper study of any of them should separate them from our theological understandings of how those sciences find their identities in God, as how each of those sciences reveal God's glory. That is something you will never learn when you go to college, but in eternity we will reconnect every single science back to the One who created it and we will learn the ever-increasing levels of God's glory in the sciences.

Why? Because God is going to continue what He started, the revealing of His glory to the whole creation, but in eternity, that glory will be revealed in its fulness to His sons and daughters who will have an appreciation for it, with the result that we know Him more and love Him more – a process I believe will continue forever. And because you will have the ability to move from one end of the creation to the other, not only will you be struck with the obvious aspects of all that God has made, but a whole new level of seeing God's glory will be discovered by you over and over and over again as we go through the ages to come.

You didn't really think that what you understand about God right now is the sum total of His glory did you? You didn't really think that what you understood on day one in eternity was the sum total of all there was to know. You didn't think that our limited knowledge was going to be enough to continue to impress us forever without learning anything more about how great God is, did you?

You have to stop looking at the Cross as the end, and start looking at the Cross as the means to a world without end. Jesus was great in His work of redemption on the Cross, but I have news for

you, He was already great in eternity past before the Cross took place. He isn't great because of the Cross, the Cross happened because He was already great. And we have not yet seen the end of His greatness. But, as the ages to come unfold, I believe we will see a never-ending demonstration of His greatness with each age revealing new aspects we have never seen before! Why do I say that? I say that because I believe the glory of our God and Savior is inexhaustible. I believe there are no limits to God's glory.

Can we honestly think we can exhaust the glory of God? Do we really think we can plumb the depths of all God is? Do we believe that we will finally know everything there is to know about God, and there will be nothing left to learn? In eternity, we will continue our education in the glory of God and the admiration of the Lord Jesus, forever! And our admiration will grow in accordance with our learning. That is why I say, in eternity, you will discover, you may write, you can instruct, you will encourage, and even educate the fellow members of the body of Christ and maybe even those on the earth.

ix. Let me sum it up: In eternity, you will have a real life, not a make-believe life.

It will be freer than this life could ever be. It will be life the way God intended; full of pleasure and goodness as we experience the fullness of every good emotion, every right feeling, the fullness of wonder and awe, the fulfillment of purpose, the sense of belonging, the true knowledge of worth, the full expression of every feeling that God intends for our glorified body to experience.

We won't work 24/7, which brings us to the issue of sleep. Some argue that we will not sleep because we will have perfect bodies, but define what that means. The same argument could apply to eating, but we know we can do that. Let me ask you a question, do you think Adam and Eve slept? If they did, then sleep cannot be viewed as an imperfection. Sleep would have been a matter of God's design for the rhythm of life.

It is certainly part of life on earth. Maybe we won't sleep in eternity, or maybe we will. And I am not talking about the cure for fatigue. But if we will eat, walk, serve, work, laugh and all the other, then don't be too quick to say we won't sleep. There is not a plain statement either way; we are conjecturing again.

But, we will work. Our work will be marvelous. No one will have to talk us into working, it will be our pleasure. Why do I say that? Because, like our fellowship, our friendships, and our liberty, our work will also be perfected in the heavenly places. For one thing, we will know what we are doing and how that fits into eternity. I say that because everything we do is supposed to be with understanding, not blindly like God is keeping us in the dark.

Now, I want to run through things in a list so we can put them all together. As you look over this list, think to yourself, “Do I think this is true in eternity or not?” If you think it is, think to yourself about why you think that. Try to think of some principle that applies to the issue you are looking at. Spend some time talking to your Father about these and considering what these will make life like for you in eternity.

- You will personally know the Lord Jesus. (More about that next week)
- You will make new friends and deepen the relationships you already have
- You will have adventures
- You will explore the creation from one end to the other
- You will see things and you won’t be confined to just things on the earth
- You will keep your free will
- You will keep your personality
- You will learn – and you will love it
- You will create
- You will discover
- You will be thrilled
- You will be happy
- You will be fulfilled
- You will be important
- You will be engaged in something bigger than you, which means you will have purpose
- You will have true friends
- You will be loved – increasingly so forever

There is more to this but let me just say that all of this will be yours without the pain, suffering and evil that was so prevalent in this world. No pride, no pretense, no ulterior motives. I know many people are not interested in heaven, but they should be. In fact, we should have it on our minds all the time. We should be homesick for it, just like Paul was.

Philippians 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

Our soul should ache to get there. We have put our roots down in this present evil world. (For me, the more people I lose on this side makes me long for the other side.) Our view of what is waiting for us has dimmed. And as a result, many Christians don’t want to go to heaven, they want to stay here for as long as they can. Short-sighted, to say the least. Personally, I can hardly wait to get there because I know something about what is waiting for us there.

- e. Talk about the celebration that awaits a son or daughter who has been godly – because there is an education going on right now for those who are already with the Lord, they are learning what to look for as far as godliness is concerned.

Why do I say this? Firstly, because the creature has an earnest expectation of us as sons of God. It is waiting for our manifestation as sons and daughters of God. Why? Because it knows we will deliver it from its bondage of corruption. From that I going to extrapolate that if the creature knows, then so do the other members of the body of Christ. They both have a vested interest in us becoming edified, godly saints. Combine this with the idea that we are made a spectacle to the world, men and angels. That means that not only God's angels see us when the life of Christ is lived in us, but so does Satan's angels. So does the creature. And I believe, so does the body of Christ.

And when someone gets it right, when we live out of the doctrine instead of our flesh, when we put the power of God's grace on display in the midst of our suffering, it is a big deal. A very big deal. And if it is as big a deal as I think it is, those who have gone before us are cheering us on – encouraging us to godliness, to the patient endurance of our sufferings, to overcome evil with good, to defeat the Adversary, to stand fast in the faith, and to be more than conquerors. They want us to succeed. And what you need to understand that after a lifetime of fighting the good fight of faith, what is waiting for you is a hero's welcome; a joyous celebration. Now if that sounds far fetched to you, just know that after major victories, God is into the triumphant parade which manifests what has been accomplished. For example,

Colossians 2:15 *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

God did this openly. He was rubbing it in Satan's face, so to speak. Our homegoing is meant to be glorious, and that openly too. If you are godly, the host of heaven will know who you are – just like Satan's realm will know who you are. Look at an example of this in Acts 19 where some men tried to emulate what Paul was preaching, and they had no power over those evil spirits.

**Acts 19:15** And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

Talk about being a spectacle to the world, to men and to angels – the unseen realm is watching – they know who you are. The body of Christ is cheering for something more than a touchdown catch or a home run or a buzzer-beating basket, they are cheering for God's heroes, His sons and daughters who will be resplendent with glory. I do think the heavenly places will be different for some than it will be for others in the kind of work that we will perform. The decision to train to labor with your Father, I believe is a choice that is separate from the decision to trust Christ as Savior. (the cry of Abba, Father)

This is free will choice that every saint will make, or not, during their lifetime. You may be thinking, what if someone does not know about the cry of Abba, Father? While I think it is very helpful to have it stated plainly, a person does not have to use our vocabulary to get the same

result. Growing in grace is growing in grace, no matter what you call it. In other words, any saint who has the desire to discipleship, to spiritual formation, to Christ-likeness, etc. can have the very life of God being lived in them.

There is a lot more to say about what eternity will be like, but let me end this session with a few statements that I think are self-evident.

1. The more you love God, the more you will enjoy and appreciate eternity in the heavenly places. Therefore, you should go to work on loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to **them that love God**, to them who are called according to *his* purpose.

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for **them that love him**. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 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.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into **the love of God**, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

We are actually going to talk next week about how we can do that; love God with everything that is in us. But may I say that the more you know about God, and the more you get to know Him personally, the more like Him you become, the greater will be our love for Him.

In eternity, I believe we will become absorbed with the depth of who God is and I believe that will further transform us and that depth of transformation will continue throughout eternity.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, everything will be subject to God that He may be “all in all.”

1 Corinthians 15:28 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**.

So, what does that phrase mean? It means:

- God, will be all things to all His saints (this includes the perfect happiness in soul and body of the saints, the full communication of God’s divine favor upon us.) We do not yet fully realize God as our “all in all,” but one day in eternity, we will.
- 2. The more you love Jesus, the more you will enjoy eternity, but do not worry about this one, it is going to happen. We will talk about this extensively next week and I will tell you exactly how this is going to happen.

3. Eternity will be a time of perfect Happiness & Joy. The Declaration of Independence called the pursuit of happiness one of our “unalienable” rights. Now I do not believe my third point just because we have a founding document that refers to it. But I do know that God has wired us in such a way that happiness (real joy) motivates just about everything we do.

If you have found pleasures and delights in this life, then consider this, God has designed them all to point us toward our place in eternity. They are a foretaste of what is waiting. The thrill of close relationships, the fulfilling joy of a marriage partner, the satisfaction of wonderful friends, the delight of beautiful music, the rich aroma of a rose, the smell of freshly cut grass, the wonder of a sunset, the satisfaction of really good food and fellowship, and even the victories of our sports teams – all of this and more are meant to point us toward our life in the New Heavens, where all of this will unfold in ever-increasing levels of joy and wonder.

Eternity is not for those who despise joy and pleasure, it is for those who enjoy these temporal ones on earth and long for more in eternity. God is a happy, joyful God. He dwells in endless pleasure and deep joy. Our desire to happy and joyful comes from God dwelling in His own happiness and joy. Eternity will be a forever of the pleasure of participating in God’s own pleasure! God wants us to be ecstatically happy! Does that shock you?

This world contains some wonderful pleasures, but many of them are fleeting. What God has planned for us is a world of complete happiness, intense pleasure and deep joy. If you yearn for that kind of happiness, then you should be homesick for the heavenly places. If you think you are happy here, this is nothing more than the ultrasound picture of what the real baby is going to look like. We have pleasure in things here, but one day our happiness and joy will be “face to face.”

I want to end this point with the last line of C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Last Battle*, with a slight change for our context here, “All our time in this world and all our adventures in life have only been the cover and the title page: in eternity, we will at last, begin chapter one of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.” I agree with him.

4. God has designed eternity for those who long for the completion to God’s grand story, where we get to be the imagers of God that we were designed to be. In eternity, we will get to live out the divine desire for us to finally be the fulness of who we were designed to be. We are not just saved from something, we are saved to something.
5. Eternity will be a universal fellowship – but it will be a fellowship of different. Each will have a story to tell and we will want to hear them all. It is together that we find such pleasure in loving others.

6. Eternity will be a Beloved Community - Eternity cannot get going until evil is done away with and all injustices are dealt with. And those will be handled at the JSoC.

Once that is done, now the body of Christ can enjoy community the way God intended. If you long to be part of a community, then God's eternal community is for you.

Who will be on your invitation list? Who would you like to hear from? Who would you like to spend some time with?

## Session 16

### 10) How we can we have free will in eternity and not sin against God?

As we get started, I want to debunk what I think is commonly held “wrong reason” for why we will not sin in eternity. Most people think that it will be for lack of opportunity. After all, sin is going to be done away with.

First of all, think about what sin is. We normally think of certain hurtful, or evil actions as sinful (stealing, immorality, murder, lying, etc.).

Today, in this present evil world, opportunities for sin are readily available in all sorts of ways: through the internet/through industries of sin/by the promotion of ungodliness in the culture through various entertainment media of songs, movies and television/through the public display of sin in real life events/ through the change of societal norms which permit and encourage ungodly behavior/and through the pressure exerted on everyone to conform to those changing norms.

Those things may promote, tempt and pressure people to engage in certain sinful behaviors, but those things will not be a part of our existence in eternity. But that is not why we will refuse them.

Because of certain things which will happen with us during our life and once this life is over, even if we were confronted with the evil things we deal with now, rather than be tempted, we would be grieved in our spirit by those things and be truly repulsed by them. But let me be clear, the reason we will not sin in eternity is not because God is making it impossible to do so by commandeering our free will, but rather by the work that He will do in our inner man.

There was a Netflix series about people going to heaven. In this show, the people who went to the “good place” (as they called it) were unable to utter any profanities. When they tried to talk like they did on earth, their words were automatically changed to something legitimate and good.

I do not think that is how it will actually work for us. I don’t think it is impossible to be profane, I think that we won’t because of the work done in our inner man. To further the example, I do not think we will be tempted to tell a lie in eternity, because of the inner man work, but not because it is impossible for untrue words to come out of our mouths. I do not think there is some invisible governor that edits our thoughts and speech so they are always godly no matter our intentions, I think our intentions will always be godly because of what we have learned, which has conformed us to the image of Christ.

Think with me about sin. After all, what is sin, really? Sin is not a real entity; not a physical substance. Sin does not separately exist on its own. Sin is not some evil creature that can be imprisoned or exterminated. Sin is the corruption of the passions, inclinations, and desires of the



mind. It is the result of a choice to do other than righteousness. When we chose to think and act righteously, then there is no sin.

According to the Bible some examples of sin are:

- Selfishness – I Corinthians 8:12

1 Corinthians 8:9-12 But take heed lest by any means **this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock** to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But **when ye sin so against the brethren**, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Call it abusing your liberty, call it not living with others in mind, call it being an offense to others, but it all boils down to selfishness.

This says a lot about why the first core feature of godly love that is presented in the sonship education is selflessness. To think of yourself more highly than you ought to think is to sin against God and against our fellow members of the body of Christ.

Now, look at the next example. Paul says that it is by the Law that we know what sin is.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: **for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

Then Paul says that the Law showed him that his covetousness was sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: **for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.**

From this we understand that not just covetousness is sin, but any violation of the righteousness of the Law is sin.

Therefore...

- The violation of the Law – Romans 3:20
- ... is the second example of sin.

The third example is that sin is simple disobedience to God.

- Disobedience to the doctrine – Romans 6:16

Romans 6:16-17 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto

righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

There is a lot in these two verses, but in a nutshell, we have two choices, to obey the form of doctrine we have in our inner man or not to obey.

The kind of sins that we will be refusing in eternity is not just murder and stealing, but pride, selfishness, envy, and obedience to what we have learned. I don't think that our refusal of these sins is because we cannot envy a fellow member of the body, or because it is impossible to be selfish in eternity, but rather that we will choose not to think like that because we will have Christ formed in us to the degree that we see those things the same way our Father does.

To say it another way, we will not live selfishly in eternity but it will not be out of force, but out of our transformed will which has been conformed to the will of our Father.

And why will we think that way? Because there is a three-phased education that we are going through: 1) our ongoing education about sin here and now on this earth teaches us of sins consequences, 2) the finality of that education at the JSOC, and 3) our ongoing education in eternity whereby we are constantly and continually being conformed to the image of God's Son.

There are sins which we will not be able to commit in eternity (like murder) because it will be impossible to do that on our fellow saints with glorified bodies. But there are other sins that depend upon our edification to avoid them. That is what makes all phases of our education so important.

So, if God is not magically making it impossible to sin, what is going on in eternity?

- a. **The realm of our existence will be different.** For us members of the body of Christ, there will be a new heaven

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**

I realize this is in the Hebrew epistles and as such is primarily written to the believing remnant of Israel, but notice the reference is not just about the new earth, which is the domain of the remnant, but also includes the new heaven, which is our realm in eternity.

What I am doing here is just stating the fact of how things will be different, but this is not really why we would think of disobeying the will of God.

- i. When we take the place of Satan's minions in the HP, we will tear down those strongholds of evil and replace them with the righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As His body fills the

universe, we will be creating a different kind of environment that exists on this earth today.

Do you realize what I am saying? The removal of easy access to sin is not the main reason we will refuse sin. The reason we will refuse sin is because we will abhor it. Our spirit (the sum total of our character [who we have become]) will be changed into Christlikeness. As we are continually conformed to the image of God's Son throughout the ages to come, (and I think that is an everlasting, ongoing process as opposed to a "one and done" event), we will increasingly admire the Lord Jesus, love our Father, value one another, be conformed to Christ's image and be equipped to work in the next age to come.

- ii. For those who are on the earth, it will be very different as well in that the world and its lusts will pass away

1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And **the world passeth away, and the lust thereof**: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

- iii. One day, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and everything associated with the pride of life will pass away.

**b. Satan and his minions will be gone to the lake of fire along with the CoW/PoE**

- i. The source of much temptation will be eliminated along with the allurements of the deception

**c. We get a new body**

- i. When we trusted Christ and were given a new identity in Him, we were truly set free from sin. Our soul and spirit were redeemed but not our body. Even though we are dead to sin, we still have the habits of sin in various members of our body which we have to contend with.
- ii. As Christ is formed in us, we are actually transforming who we are in our human spirit so that our spirit is being conformed to Christ's image. This is often not a quick transformation. Years of bad habits are not always overturned immediately.
- iii. When we get our glorified body, it is not a holdover of the old, but it is a new body. There are no habits of sin in its members. This is a big reason why no more sin for us. The old habits and the old allurements of sin are all gone. That was the last connection to sin, and in our new body that connection will be severed forever.

**d. Our firsthand experience and education of what sin produces**

- e. **The JSoC that completes our knowledge of evil**
- f. **We will not allow the glory of our life in the ages to come to be ruined**
  - i. We will have a glorious work
  - ii. We will have an exciting life/it will not be boring
  - iii. We realize what sin would do to our eternal life and we would no more jeopardize that than we would poke our eye out with scissors
- g. **The personal relationship we will have with Jesus**
  - i. Jesus will be our closest friend in eternity
  - ii. I also think He will be Billie's closest friend
  - iii. He will also be your closest friend
  - iv. He will intimately know every single member of His body, not out of His omniscience, but out of real, developed relationship.

Why do I say this? Because of the principle of the body. How well do you know your body? Do you ever look at your hands? Does anyone know your hands better than you? No. Why not? Because those are your hands, they are part of your body. When a part of your body hurts, you know it without anyone having to tell you. Why, because it is your body and you are so connected to it that you realize when something is wrong or something is hurting, etc.

Well, we are the members of Christ's body and I believe that He will know the members of His body better than anyone. He will be intimately familiar with us and us with Him. And guess what, because He is the head of the body, He will take the initiative to develop this relationship with each of us.

Here is another principle; what is it that God the Father is wanting to accomplish? He wants to accomplish the exaltation of His Son. God knows that if we could know His Son like He does, if we could see Him for who He really is, we would, as free moral agents, exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we finally get to know Him for who He is (yes, I believe this is a growing, on-going relationship, formed in real time by real experiences and time together) no will have to command us to bow down and worship Him, or love Him, or respect Him, but we will worship and love Him out of a heart that is full of love, admiration and appreciation for all that He is. For there has never been a creature like Him.

And by the way, the people in hell will never get to know Him like that. Yes, they will bow the knee and confess that He is Lord, but they will not love Him, respect Him and worship Him like we will. They will not see Him for who He truly is for they will never spend time with Him.

Speculation: Think of it this way, one day you are sitting on the porch on your home, talking with, let's say a group of us who are listening right now. And we are fellowshiping and laughing and up walks the Lord Jesus. He sits down with us and I believe the first words out of

His mouth will be words expressing His love for us and words that edify and build us up. And as we ask Him questions and He talks to us about all kinds of things (say, things concerning the future ages to come) do you know what is happening? He is developing a real relationship with each one of us by spending time with us and talking to us about our lives.

I truly believe that sometimes that will be with other members of the body and sometimes it will be with us individually. Just as we do not get familiar with the members of our body by looking only at the reflection of the whole body, but by actually spending time looking at and examining each member on its own.

#### **h. The testimony reminder of the lake of fire**

I do not think this alone is enough to keep us from sin. In fact, if we are not conformed to the image of God's Son to a sufficient degree, this would not work to keep us sinless in eternity.

But God does mean for those on earth and us in the HP to see the results of rebellion and be reminded.

So, in this theodicy, we have talked about the various evils; natural evil and moral evil. Every event of suffering comes from one of these two types and both of them come from sin and rebellion against God. None of them are God's fault.

We have talked about why God allows evil. It is to provide an education so we could have an eternity of free will w/o the suffering. Was it worth it? It may not seem like it now, but as we pass through the ages to come, our past suffering will pale to almost nothing in comparison. And this is exactly what we are told.

Romans 8, the sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory!

- It is true in the outworking of time. The time aspect is just another layer of the doctrine in which this is true, as our suffering will be dwarfed by the eons of glory and goodness we will experience in eternity.
- It is true in this present life. The fact that Christ is produced in us now, not only enables us to patiently endure our sufferings to His glory. It makes us more than conquerors so that we bring glory to God and dishonor to Satan and his realm.

Romans 8, being more than a conqueror:

- When we suffer on this earth properly, (patient endurance) we are defeating the Adversary in his realm.
- The precedent was set by the Lord Jesus:

**Colossians 2:13-15** 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.

On the Cross, on this earth, by His death, Christ spoiled principalities and powers in the heavenly places and triumphed over them...in the Cross.

Any time we undergo suffering of any kind and we do so in accordance with Paul's doctrine (we suffer with Him), we are:

- Defeating Satan in his realm
- Discouraging his angels
- Demonstrating the Lord God to be the rightful possessor of heaven and earth
- Putting the power of His grace on display
- Being more than a conqueror (it does not look that way to the onlooker, it looks like we got clocked, but when it doesn't overcome us, but it works to produce the life of God's Son in us, we are triumphing over the Adversary.

And the third way in which the sufferings are not worthy to compared with the glory is:

- It is true in eternity. The glory (what our suffering produces in us in eternity) will outweigh all the suffering. What is being produced in eternity? The glory that is greater than our sufferings includes the promise of a joint-heir inheritance and of reigning with Christ, and those are more valuable than avoiding sufferings.

Take this knowledge back to Romans 12 and look at the next layer of application to the doctrine we have already learned.

And now we have a better idea of what eternity is going to be like so we actually look forward to going because it is going to be better, in every way, than we ever had in this world.