

The Greatest Letter Ever Written

An Expository Journey Through the **Epistle of Romans**

Romans 1:18-32

6-The Wrath of God is Revealed

December 31, 2023

Romans 1:18-32

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

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

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

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

We have just completed a comprehensive Examination of the Purpose and main Meaning of this entire Epistle: The Gospel; what the Gospel is (and is not); how God uses the Gospel to save Sinners; and the Relationship between the individual Believers and Righteousness. We also

discovered that verses 16&17 are Paul's *first* area of Theology and Doctrine after his Introduction in verses 1-15.

Now we will examine a very large area of inspired Scripture that begins in **Romans 1:18** and goes all the way down to **Romans 3:31** that will uncover how sinful Sin really is; and why God had to come to this earth; live a sinless Life; die on the Cross; and rise from the Dead three days later. This Section is one of the most important Passages in the entire Bible.

In **Romans 1:18-3:18** the Apostle explains *why* God had to do the two things that he speaks about in **Romans 3:19**:

1. God "*closed the Mouth*" of the entire World
2. God "*brought the entire World into Accountability*" with Himself

What these two things mean; Why God did this; Why doing this was vital; and What was going on that made these two things necessary- is the Subject of the other 62 verses.

It is fascinating to learn that when it came time for the Apostle to teach Doctrine and Theology (Biblical Truth)- he began by speaking about the Gospel (v. 15&16). But the very next Issue that Paul dealt with in this Masterpiece was the "*Wrath of God*". And that is what we will examine now. And I want to divide this Passage of 15 verses into four Parts:

1. Verses 18&19
2. Verses 20-24
3. Verses 25-27
4. Verses 28-32

... so, let's examine each one of these Parts together.

1. Romans 1:18&19

Paul began by saying,

Romans 1:18&19

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

... and this Passage calls us to examine several Questions:

1. What is the "Wrath of God"?
2. How is God's Wrath "against" ALL ungodliness and ALL Unrighteousness?
3. How do men "suppress the Truth" in Unrighteousness?
4. What does verse 19 teach?

1. What is the Wrath of God?

The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that God demonstrates His Wrath toward the people He calls, “Ungodly” and “Unrighteous”. But while God *demonstrates* His Wrath- God is NOT Wrath. In other words, Wrath is NOT a part of Who God is. So, Wrath is NOT a Characteristic or an Attribute of God. The Bible says that God is Love.

1John 4:7-21

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

19 We love, because He first loved us.

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

This Passage teaches that God loves His people and just how wonderful the Love of God really is. But verse 8 says something different. This verse says that God IS Love. And that means that Love is part of Who God is. So, in addition to loving His people- God Himself *IS* Love.

And as we ponder that- we then need to understand that the Bible teaches that God is many things (Omniscient; Omnipotent; Omnipresent, etc.)- but the Bible does NOT teach that God is Wrath. Wrath is NOT part of God’s Character and Nature. And yet, right here in **Romans 1:18**- we read:

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

So, what is God’s “Wrath”? The word that was translated into English as “Wrath” came from a Greek word (*orge*; Strong’s #3709), which means: *Anger as a State of Mind; Indignation;*

and *Desire- with great Grief*. And there are other words in the Bible that will help us to understand what God's Wrath is like:

- **Indignation** (31 times) from "*orge*"
- **Retribution** (4 times) from "*orge*"
- **Anger** (*iae* Hebrew) "*nose anger*"- *the flaring of nostrils*
- **Vengeance** (*ekdikaesis*; Strong's #1557) *the execution of Justice*

Now we live in a day where we have set ourselves as the Judge and we have put God's Character on trial. And so, we ask Questions like, "*How can Hell be Just?*" "*Why would God command the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites?*" "*Why does God always seem so Angry?*" and "*How can a loving God throw people into Hell?*"

The fact that so many people struggle with these Questions, and many more just like them, shows us that, more than ever, "*Right Thinking*" and "*Right Believing*" is needed about the Doctrine of God's Wrath. And it is needed for three Things:

1. As a Motivation for godly Living
2. As a Fuel for proper Worship
3. As a Source from which we may confront Objections to Christianity

... so, in light of that- let's look at five biblical Truths about the Wrath of God:

A. God's Wrath is Just.

It has become common for many to argue that the God of the Old Testament is a "moral Monster"- who is simply not worthy or deserving of our Worship. But this simply illustrates how far some have fallen since God used people to write down His Word. Because the biblical writers had no such Thoughts; and they didn't come to that Conclusion. In fact, to them- God's Wrath was said to be in perfect Accord with His Justice. For example, the Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 2:1-11**:

- 1 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things** [those things that Paul identified in the previous Chapter].
- 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.**
- 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?**
- 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**
- 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,**
- 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:**
- 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;**
- 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.**

9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

11 For there is no partiality with God.

... so, to Paul- God's Wrath was in perfect Proportion to human Sinfulness.

Similarly, **Proverbs 24:12** says,

If you say, "See, we did not know this," Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?

J.I. Packer summarized:

“God’s wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is. It is, instead, a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil”¹

... and that makes God's Wrath to be Correct and Right- even a Way that God receives Glory!

I have long ago tried to teach people that as bond-slaves of the Lord Christ, who say we believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God- we not only need to agree that Hell exists- but we need to go further and say that Hell is Right; it is Correct; and those who refuse to repent and trust in Jesus deserve to go to Hell forever.

The kicker is that we deserve to go to Hell, too. Every human on earth- Saved or Lost- has sinned enough to have earned a place in Hell- a thousand times over. So, we must understand that NOBODY deserves Heaven while EVERYBODY deserves Hell.

B. God's Wrath Shows that God is Serious about Sin

The horrific Death of the Son of God on the Cross- as He screamed in Agony and the Damnation of unrepentant human beings are the loudest Shouts under Heaven that God is infinitely Holy; Sin is infinitely Offensive; Wrath is infinitely Just; and Grace is infinitely Precious.

When Jesus was on the Cross- He didn't simply die- even though that would have been terrible enough. He also did much MORE than die an *excruciating* Death- even though it was horrific. God *adjudicated* the “*Sin Debt*” on Jesus that we incurred by our many Sins. In other words, God poured out the full Fury of His Wrath against every Sin on Jesus- while He was on the Cross. And this shows how serious God was (and is) about Sin- because God the father loves God the Son MORE than He loves anything or anyone else. And for God to crush what He loved the MOST- in order to pay for our Sins- shows how serious He really was (and is).

Isaiah 53:10a

But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering...

¹ JI Packer; *Knowing God*; pg. 151

C. God's Wrath is to be Feared.

God's Wrath is to be feared because all have sinned and have *"trampled God's Glory under-foot with disgust"*

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God's Wrath is also to be feared because we are justly condemned Sinners apart from Christ.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

God's Wrath is to be feared because He is powerful enough to do what He promises

Jeremiah 32:17

'Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,

Deuteronomy 32:39-42

39 'See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

40 'Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, And say, as I live forever,

41 If I sharpen My flashing sword, And My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, And I will repay those who hate Me.

42 'I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword will devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.'

And God's Wrath is to be feared because God promises eternal Punishment apart from Salvation in Jesus Christ

Matthew 25:41-46

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Revelation 20:12-15

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

D. God's Wrath is Consistent in Both the Old and New Testaments.

It is common to think of the Old Testament God as mean, harsh, and wrath-filled; and the God of the New Testament as kind, patient, and loving. Neither of these Portraits are representative of Scripture's Teaching on God or His Wrath.

We find immensely fearful Descriptions of the Wrath of God in both the Old and the New Testament. Here are just a few examples:

Jeremiah 30:23&24

23 Behold, the tempest of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, A sweeping tempest; It will burst on the head of the wicked.

24 The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back Until He has performed and until He has accomplished The intent of His heart; In the latter days you will understand this.

Nahum 1:2-15

2 A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.

3 The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither.

5 Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it.

6 Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him.

7 The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him.

8 But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, And will pursue His enemies into darkness.

9 Whatever you devise against the Lord, He will make a complete end of it. Distress will not rise up twice.

10 Like tangled thorns, And like those who are drunken with their drink, They are

consumed As stubble completely withered.

11 From you has gone forth One who plotted evil against the Lord, A wicked counselor.

12 Thus says the Lord, "Though they are at full strength and likewise many, Even so, they will be cut off and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no longer.

13 "So now, I will break his yoke bar from upon you, And I will tear off your shackles."

14 The Lord has issued a command concerning you: "Your name will no longer be perpetuated. I will cut off idol and image From the house of your gods. I will prepare your grave, For you are contemptible."

15 Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace! Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; Pay your vows. For never again will the wicked one pass through you; He is cut off completely.

The Revelation 14:17-20

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe."

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

E. God's Wrath *is* His Love in Action against Sin

WHEREAS:

- God is Love, and God does all things for His Glory (1John 4:8; Romans 4:8; 11:36).
- God loves His Glory above all
- God rules the world in such a way that brings Himself maximum Glory

THEREFORE:

- God MUST act Justly and judge all Sin by responding with Wrath!

... otherwise God would not be God.

If God did not judge all Sin- He would be agreeing with Sinners that His Glory was not worth defending. So, underneath it all- it is God's Love for His own Glory that motivates/produces/manifests His Wrath against Sin!

It is true that God's Love for His own Glory is a very sobering Reality. But even though God's Love for His own Glory thrills the soul of the Redeemed- it is NOT "good News" at all for unrepentant Sinners. In fact- it is the "worst News" they could ever get! And that is why Hebrews 10:31 says:

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

E. God's Wrath Defends God's Glory

When we sin- we insult God's Glory. When we turn to Sin; or to things that have been made and are passing away for Comfort and Hope and Joy- we are testifying that God and His Glory aren't enough for us. When we embrace Sin; or when we run away from God; or even when we seek for Safety and Security in what our own Strength can give us- we are rejecting God and His Glory. And there really isn't any way we could belittle God anymore than that.

So, our Sin insults God's Glory- it rejects God; and says that the only way we can be Happy and Satisfied and Content and Fulfilled- is by turning AWAY from God. But what makes that so terrible- is that God is not only the most powerful Being in the Universe- He is also the most- lovely; and the most beautiful; and the most important; and the most rewarding; and the most satisfying Being that could ever be. So, Sin against God and His Glory is a contradiction of the highest Order. It is ridiculous and absurd on a fundamental level- because NOTHING is as Good or Better than God!

So, when we rebel against God- we trample under our feet with disgust the very thing that God loves the MOST- His Glory! And so, God must defend what has been attacked. He must satisfy the "*Debt of Sin*" that has occurred by us rebelling against Him. And He does that by judging the Sin in the Fury of His Wrath and the Sinner- unless he repents.

F. The Knowledge of God's Wrath Encourages Saved People to Modify Their Behavior

Part of what it means to be "Lost"- is that they do NOT fear God.

Romans 3:9-19

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";

15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

... so, the "*Fear of God*" is best understood- NOT as being scared to death of God- but as a "*Reverential Respect*" of God.

But the "Saved" DO fear God. And they fear Hell; and they fear Judgement. So, the irony of this is that the ONLY people who fear God and eternal Damnation are the ones who will never be judged by God! Because the Saved love God- they want NO part of His Judgment. They ONLY seek His Approval of ALL they do! And so, this "*Reverential Respect*" for God and His Wrath *empowers* the Saved to modify their Behavior.

G. God's Wrath is Satisfied in Jesus Christ.

But even though all of this is true- in the very Center of God's Wrath- we find the ultimate Good News:

1 Timothy 1:15

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Romans 3:24-26

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

We rejoice that God has done what we could not do! And He alone has done what we didn't deserve! Charles Wesley rightly exulted in this Good News when he wrote the Hymn that says:

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain!
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

What Happens When We Sin?

When a lost person sins against God- he has "trampled under- foot with disgust"- the Glory of God.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The phrase here in English, "fall short" comes from a Greek word (*hustereo*; Strong's # 5302) which means: *to be behind; to lack; to be inferior; or to come late*. But in other Greek literature that was published and read back in the 1st Century- this term had the idea of: *being so completely disgusted with something that a person would trample it under his feet- with great disgust*.

So, when we sin- we not only *lack* the Glory of God; we not only are *inferior* to God's Glory- but we *despise* it. We walk on it- with disgust as though God's Glory deserves no Honor or Respect!

And when you realize that God loves His Glory MORE than anything else- our Sin is very horrible indeed. Because when lost people sin against God- they are ignoring and belittling and dishonoring what God loves the MOST!

So, how should God respond to that blatant Act of Disrespect? Should God simply ignore it? Should God simply chalk it up to “*boys will be boys*”? When you read the Bible- you see how God understands His Own Glory. For example,

Isaiah 42:8

I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

Isaiah 43:6&7

6 “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth,

7 Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”

Isaiah 48:11

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another.

... and this is why God said,

Exodus 20:7

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

God’s “Name”; His Reputation; Who He is- is so glorious; so important; so beautiful; so necessary- that to “take” God’s Name “in Vain”; for no Reason; for no serious or important Purpose- IS to *marginalize* God and *lower* His Importance in other people’s eyes and minds. And that is why the Bible teaches that God is “Jealous”.

Exodus 34:12-17

12 “Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.

13 “But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim

14 —for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—

15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,

16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

17 “You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

1Corinthians 13:4-8a

**4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,
5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,**

6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails...

... and in order to comprehend this better- we need to carefully examine both of these Passages.

Here in **Exodus 34:14**- the Bible clearly says that “**God, whose Name is Jealous is a jealous God**”. But then in **1Corinthians 13:4** the Bible also says, “**Love is NOT jealous**”. So, is this a Contradiction? Does this mean that God is not Love or that maybe God is even sinning by being jealous? No, what it means is that God’s Jealousy and ours- are NOT the same. God is sinless and we are “... **flesh, sold into bondage to sin**” (**Romans 7:14b**). So, our Jealousy is fallen and sinful while God’s Jealousy is pure and holy.

God’s Jealousy is based on Who He is (God Almighty) while ours is based on who we are (creatures of the Dust). God’s Jealousy comes from the Fact that, because God is Pure and Undeified- all peoples SHOULD love and want Him; everyone SHOULD worship God and see God as the BEST and the MOST desired Being in the Universe.

What is Sin?

1John 3:4

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Because God is a perfectly sinless Being (Holy)- He is the MOST loveable; the MOST beautiful; and the MOST important Being of all- He *deserves* all Praise; and ALL Honor; and ALL Glory! He is *entitled* to it! He’s *earned* it! And therefore, God *expects* and *demands* it! It is from the Reality of Who God is- that makes it both Correct and Right to worship Him and a Sin not to.

But we also sin when we live our Lives- as though God has not already spoken and given us the Standard by which we are to submit. Before Jesus came and died and rose again- that “Standard” of how we are to live our Lives- was the Old Testament. But now- the Standard is three Things:

1. Who Jesus *is*
2. What Jesus *said*
3. What Jesus *did*

... and now we read the Old Testament “*through the lens of the New*”.

So, when people sin and *withhold* their Admiration; their Allegiance; their Obedience; and their Adoration of God- God’s Glory is insulted and offended. And that means that, to remain perfectly Righteous, *requires* God to *settle* that Transgression; and to *adjudicate* that Abomination. And so, out from God’s pristine Righteousness- the Wrath of God flows out to the sinning individual. This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote this in **Romans 2:23**:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

What is the “Glory of God”?

The “*Glory of God*” is one of the most common phrases in the Language of Believers. We talk about it; we sing about it; we discuss it; and we endeavor to do all things- to it. But what is it? What do we mean when we say, the “*Glory of God*” and how is it different from the “*Holiness of God*” and the “*Righteousness of God*”?

The Holiness of God The *summation* of all of God’s Qualities; Characteristics; and Attributes. The Holiness of God is the collection of Characteristics that make God to be God.

The Righteousness of God The perfect “Rightness” of God. God’s Perfection

The Glory of God The “Holiness of God”- seen; understood; displayed; or revealed.

So, Sin is NOT limited to the individual visible Acts of Rebellion and Wickedness that we do on a regular Basis. It is MUCH deeper and infinitely MORE profound than that. Sin is also NOT *enjoying* God; it is also NOT *loving* Him who is the MOST loveable. Sin is also *beholding* God in His pristine Glory and then saying, “*No thank You- I’d rather have this*”- pointing to ANYTHING else! And that means that Sin is us *rejecting* God as Who He really is- the MOST *satisfying* Being in the entire Universe. So, that means that Sin is:

- The Glory of God *not* honored.
- The Holiness of God *not* revered.
- The Greatness of God *not* admired.
- The Power of God *not* praised.
- The Truth of God *not* sought.
- The Wisdom of God *not* esteemed.
- The Beauty of God *not* treasured.
- The Goodness of God *not* savored.
- The Faithfulness of God *not* trusted.
- The Promises of God *not* believed.
- The Commandments of God *not* obeyed.
- The Justice of God *not* respected.
- The Wrath of God *not* feared.
- The Grace of God *not* cherished.
- The Presence of God *not* longed for.
- The Person of God *not* loved.

What Is the Deepest Root of Sin?

What Paul wrote here in **Romans 1:18-32** helps us to answer the Question *biblically*:
“*What is Sin? What is the Essence and Root of all sinning?*”

And let’s go for *deepest* Root, first. I want to find out if what has been taught by many in the Past is true when they said,

We humans are so sinful that apart from the Grace of God in Christ we cannot do any Good Works at all

It's a pressing Question, because we call MUCH of what unbelievers do, "Good"- like when they build Hospitals; and keep the speed limit; and negotiate Peace; and heal Diseases; and feed the Poor; and pay a fair Wage, and on and on. And the Bible itself says that ordinary people- without reference to their Faith- can do "Good Works" in that certain sense.

Romans 13:3

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

So, what did the early Fathers of the Faith mean when they said,
"Unsaved human beings are *incapable* of doing Good Works."

... and why do I agree with them?

The most penetrating and *extensive* Treatment of Sin in the Bible is **Romans 1-3**. And even when the word isn't used, we know that is what Paul is dealing with because, when he comes to summarize it, he says,

Romans 3:9

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

... and he leaves no doubt about his Conclusion in the next few verses:

Romans 3:10-18

**10 As it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOTE EVEN ONE;
11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."**

... and yet, people deny even the Existence of Hell and eternal Punishment. Why?

If Man is as Sinful; and as Evil; and as "dead to God" as the Apostle wrote here- would that not make Hell- *necessary*? Yes! But because Hell is necessary (because of our Sin)- that also makes Justification by Faith alone- *necessary*! Because for Paul- it was precisely the "*Essential*

Sinfulness” of all Humankind that made a Salvation based on Grace alone; through Faith alone- apart from ANY/ALL human “Works”- necessary!

So, do we really know our own Condition? Do we know what Paul meant by our “Essential Sinfulness”? Do we have a grasp of what it is about ourselves that requires the Death of the God/Man for us to be saved? Do we have any suitable Notion of our own Evil? All of this is somehow proportionate to what it cost to save us.

There is ONE THING that forever rules out the Notion that we can be saved by what we do for ourselves: We are so sinful; so fallen; so Lost- we can’t contribute anything to the Basis of why God accepted us. There are no Good Works anywhere- that are Good enough within unregenerate Humanity. And there never has been- ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve into Sin. That’s how bad our Condition is.

The reason that the Doctrine of Justification as well as the Doctrine of Hell is so despised, maligned, twisted, and misunderstood in our day- is because the modern Church is basically ignorant of two other Truths from the Bible:

1. The Holiness of God
2. The radical Ruination of Man in the Fall

But if we concentrate on those two Truths- we will see the true Nature and Depth and Power and Extent of Sin as well as the “white-hot Pasion” that God has for His own Glory. And by knowing those two Truths- we will always have a correct view of, not only Justification- but also of the Necessity of Hell.

So, based on that- my own Definition of Sin is:

Any Feeling; Thought; Speech; or Action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God above all other things.

... and the Bottom of Sin- the Root of all sinning- is such a heart- a heart that prefers *anything* above God- a heart that does not *treasure* God above all other persons and all other things. And so, God’s Wrath is the adjudication of the Offense against God’s Glory that our Sin has caused.

2. How is God’s Wrath “against” ALL Ungodliness and ALL Unrighteousness?

... or in what Way is God’s Wrath against ALL Ungodliness and ALL Unrighteousness?

And the Answer is found in two Ways:

1. Through Conviction that leads to genuine Repentance and eternal Salvation
2. Through Judgment that leads to eternal Condemnation

For those chosen by God for Salvation (the “Elect”)- God’s Wrath moves toward granting us Conviction of that Sin (godly Sorrow)- which leads to a genuine Repentance; which, in turn leads to eternal Salvation.

2Corinthians 7:8-11

8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it— for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

But for those who are NOT chosen- the Wrath of God simply brings God's Judgment down on them in this Life and then, in the next Life- eternal Damnation. And that means that ALL Sin; ALL Offenses against God and against His Glory will be handled in one of two Ways:

1. On the Cross in Salvation
2. In Hell through eternal Damnation

... and there will be no Accounts left outstanding. And this is why the Apostle said this:

Romans 1:18a

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness

...

So, either Jesus will absorb ALL of God's Wrath against our Sins in Salvation- or we will pay the full Price for sinning against an all holy God ourselves in the Lake of Fire! But whether Jesus takes our Sins or not- ALL Unrighteousness and ALL Ungodliness will be addressed.

3. How do people “suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness”?

Romans 1:18

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

... the Apostle tells us *how* in the next 14 verses:

Romans 1:19-32

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

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

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

There are three primary Sins that illustrate what it means to “Suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness”

1. Knowing God but not honoring Him as God (v.21)
2. Exchanging the Glory of God for Images (v. 23)
3. Exchanging the Truth of God for a Lie (v. 25)

And God responds to these three Sins with three “*Divine Abandonments*”

- 1. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. (v. 24)**
- 2. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, (v. 26)**
- 3. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, (v. 28)**

In each Case- we see that “*God gave them over*”. And what God gave them over to was:

1. So that their physical bodies would be “dishonored among them” (v. 24)
2. Women (and Men) exchanged the “natural function” for that which is “unnatural”
3. To a “depraved mind”- so they would believe a Lie and do things that are NOT “proper”

This shows us that Sin always leads to an *ever-declination* of more Sin- that is more heinous than the first. But it is important to realize that when we see people go deeper and deeper into

Sin- that is NOT something that God is going to judge them for at some later time. No, that IS the Judgment of God! That IS the Wrath of God! Because when people are going deeper and deeper into their Wickedness- they are testifying that God has ALREADY “turned them over” and is no longer dealing with them. That is what makes this Passage so frightening.

4. What does Verse 19 Teach?

because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

As we have discovered, the word, “because” means: “for”; or the “reason for”. So, the Reason that God’s Wrath is poured out “**against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness**” is because these are NOT people who do not know or who do not understand the Truth about God. These are people who DO know the Truth about God but who do not LOVE the Truth about God.

2Thessalonians 2:10b-12

10 ...with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Here the Apostle links “believing the Truth” with “loving the Truth”. So, if a person does NOT believe the Truth- it is because He also doesn’t love the Truth; he doesn’t admire the Truth; he doesn’t see any Value or Importance or Worth in the Truth.

But also notice that “loving the Truth” is a requirement for Salvation:

... they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

So, Salvation comes as a Result of us *hearing* the Truth; *understanding* the Truth; and then *accepting* the Truth; *embracing* or *loving* the Truth about Jesus and about what He said and what He did and Who He is. And then Salvation is “confirmed”; or proved to be true- by those who say they believe- then striving to *obey* the Truth.

But then look at God’s Response to people who do “**not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved**”:

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Why is it that many people can become emotionally and morally indignant over things like, Poverty and Exploitation and Prejudice and Abortion and the Infractions of Religious Liberty and the manifold Injustices of Man against Man, and yet feel little, or no, Remorse or Indignation or Outrage that God is Disregarded, Disbelieved, Disobeyed, Dishonored, and thus

Belittled, by millions and millions of people in the world? And the answer is: Sin. And that is the ultimate Outrage of the entire Universe. And that is why God is so angry with it and has damned it so severely. Nothing is as Bad and as Destructive and as Evil- as Sin.

Once Paul had made clear what the Essence or the Root of Sin is in **Romans 1–3**, he then went about to show the magnitude of its Power in us- throughout the next several Chapters. For example, Paul speaks of Sin:

- *Reigning* like a King in Death (**Romans 5:21**)
- Holding Dominion like a Lord (**Romans 6:14**)
- *Enslaving* like a Slave-master (**Romans 6:6, 16f, 20**)
- To whom we have been *sold* (**Romans 7:14**)
- As a *Force* that produces other Sins (**Romans 7:8**)
- As a *Power* that seizes the Law and kills (**Romans 7:11**)
- As a hostile occupying *Tenant* that dwells in us (**Romans 7:17, 20**)
- and a *Law* that takes us captive (**Romans 7:23**).

... and the powerful Presence of Sin in us, defines us until we are miraculously born again.

John 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

... and Paul adds,

Romans 7:18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

What we are apart from the New Birth (as a new Creation by the Spirit of God because Christ), is the very “embodiment” of continual Resistance to God.

Romans 8:7

because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

Now *why* is this true? Why is the “Mind set on the Flesh” *hostile* toward God? Why does it not subject itself to the Law of God and is not able to do so? Because the “Mind set on the Flesh” doesn’t love God and doesn’t *want* to. So, ALL lost people disapprove of God as the supreme Treasure and prefer other things- ANYTHING other than Jesus.

So, you may lay to rest forever the Notion that your Sin is mainly what you “do” or “don’t do”. It’s not mainly what you “do”- it is mainly who you “are”- until you are a new Creature in Christ. And even then, for us who are born of God, it is an ever-present, indwelling Enemy to be put to death every day by the Spirit.

Now as we go further into this Section- we see how “Current” or “Relevant” the Bible is with what is going on in our Day. In fact, Romans is so “up to date” in its Analysis of the human Condition that it almost takes your breath away. Because in this single Passage- we see how God’s Word relates to Theories of “*Naturalistic Evolution*” (Darwinian Evolution); to the entire

Issue of “*confused and sinful Sexuality*” (Homosexuality/Transgenderism, etc.); as well as certain sexually transmitted Diseases. We will also see how God’s Word relates to the Insolence and Arrogance and Disrespect of many young people toward their Parents and others in Authority.

And we will see it in the immediately relevant Issue of the contemporary Phenomenon of the “*Spin Doctor*”- the person whose Job is to put his finger into the wind of Public Opinion and decide how to bend the Facts to make them sound appealing, with little or no regard for Truth. The people who live by Polls, not Principle. That is what this Passage is about.

But lest we become Self-righteous- as **Romans 2:1** warns us so powerfully:

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

... we should understand this:

EVERYBODY is a “Spin Doctor” by Nature.

... every one of us is “spring-loaded” to put our own Failings in the very “best light”- while, at the same Time- we put the Failings of our Adversaries in the very “worst light”.

We soften our own Sins with mild words; while we skewer others with harsh words. Or worse, we see the Sins of others and are completely blind to our own. And when the Truth of God’s Word hunts us down and corners us- we will dodge and distort and evade and mislead and equivocate and lie. And when that doesn’t work- we will “suppress the truth”- we will shift to blaming and accusing and deflecting — anything to stop the Truth from having its full Effect in our Lives. That’s what **Romans 1:18** is about. So, this Passage is so Relevant it takes your breath away.

All of Us — Not Just Politicians

But we are not talking about Politicians here. We are talking about Humans in general. In other words, this is the way I am- apart from the Work of sovereign Grace in my Life. And this is the way you are- apart from God’s Mercy. It would be fool’s play to turn this Passage into a Commentary on the gutting of Truth in our Government. That Application would be way too small and would let all of us here right off the hook- which is not what Scripture or Teaching is about.

The Issue here is our own Heart and just how WE “suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness.” This Passage not simply about a particular Class of Politicians or a Class of especially “bad” People. This Passage is about all of Humanity. And the Conclusion to what Paul teaches here- comes in **Romans 3:9- 18:**

Romans 3:9-18

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

**12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP
DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."**

... which is NOT describing those “other Bad people”.

This is the natural and normal Condition of ALL of Humanity who has NOT experienced the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, the Issue before us in this Passage- is about how people like us, who are bent from Birth to distort and suppress the Truth, can get free from this Slavery and be saved. It’s all about pointing us back to **Romans 1:16&17**:

**16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

So, here’s the text:

Romans 1:18

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

There it is: “ungodly” and “unrighteous” people- as we ALL are without the Grace of God- they suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness. Now how does that work? What is that like in actual Experience? And what is the Remedy?

So, exactly what “Truth” is being suppressed? And what does it mean that we suppress it “in Unrighteousness”?

What Is the Truth We Suppress?

What is the Truth that ungodly people suppress? The Answer is given in the following verses. Read with me verses 19–21:

**19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.
20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

We suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness- because that which is known about God [first Clue: the Truth being suppressed is something “known” about God. [then Paul gets very specific; here is the Truth that is known about God from the created world- two things:

God’s eternal Power
God’s divine Nature

... and Paul said these two things: have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they [the ungodly people who are suppressing this Truth] are without Excuse.

Now that means that there is an “Objective Truth” about God that we suppress- His eternal Power and full Deity. But then he told us that there is another “Subjective Truth”- which is the *Response* we are supposed to make or give or have to this Truth about God:

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

... and that is the Response: We should glorify and thank God!

So, here is the Truth that we suppress apart from God’s Grace in our lives:

- There is a God
- He is the Creator of all things and therefore is NOT “a” god; or one of many gods- but THE God!
- And this ONE God is powerful- *more* powerful than everything else- because He made everything else
- And this one, powerful God is “Eternal” because there was nothing *outside* of Himself that could bring Himself into “Being”
- Therefore, we- God’s Creatures- exist to *display* His Glory- and not to *compete* with Him for Glory
- And we must exist in *absolute* Dependence on Him. We do NOT supply God- God supplies us
- And therefore, we are to live in *constant* Gratitude for all this.

That is the Truth that we suppress in Unrighteousness. And this is confirmed in verses 25 and 28:

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Now notice in verse 25- that the truth that is being “exchanged”; or “gotten rid of”; or “suppressed” is the Truth about God. And the Result of this Exchange- is that these ungodly people “**worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**” And this is the *same* as saying,

“They did not glorify him as God or give thanks to him, but instead glorified the creature and took credit for what was owing only to God.”

... so, they exchanged “*God-worship*” for “*Self-worship*”. Idolatry. The worship of Idols and Images. They suppressed the Truth that God is infinitely Glorious and that we are totally dependent on Him.

Or consider verse 28:

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

Not “*seeing fit to acknowledge God any longer*”- is the same as “*suppressing the Truth*.” God is true, but since the ungodly people don’t want Him in their Knowledge, they will eagerly suppress this Truth. They will “exchange it”; “Distort it”; “Hide it”; “try to change it”; and “run from it”. And the End of those people-is that they will eventually become completely blind to the Truth about God.

And so, “spiritual Blindness” is the point of **Romans 1:21**:

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

... in other words, part of our Condition as Lost people- in suppressing the Truth about God is that we become “Darkened”. You don’t just hold the Truth down because you *don’t* like it- but because you can’t even see it anymore!

This is why so many will say, “*I don’t suppress the Truth of God; I don’t think there is any Truth of God to suppress.*” And Paul would respond to that by saying, “*The only Explanation for such a Stance in this world that God has made is a ‘darkened heart’- ‘spiritual Blindness to Divine Reality.’*”

So, let’s sum up what the Truth is that we suppress. The Truth is that God exists- and He is both Eternal and infinitely Powerful. And this God supplies us with all that we have. Therefore, God is gloriously “Self-sufficient” with no Needs that we can meet. And this Truth is our Reason for existing and why we are so thankful for all He has given us- for the Privilege and the Honor of displaying His Glory by the Way we Think and Feel and Act.

Psalm 50:23

He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God.”

We Get the Blessing, He Gets the Glory

In other words, the Truth is that the Universe is radically “*God-centered*”: it comes from God; and it exists *solely* for the Display of His Glory! And human Life is also supposed to be radically “*God-centered*”- NOT by “working for God” as if He were a very *needy* Deity- but by our being thankful to Him and exulting in the Grace that so much Good comes to us, even amid terrible Suffering.

Please don't miss the Implication here, because it relates so deeply to the Truth we cherish here at Covenant of Peace. Here is the Truth: there are two great Demands of God on the Lives of all Humans:

1. That we *exult* in God's Bounty to us (that's Thankfulness)
2. That we *reflect* or *display* God's Glory- in, by, and through the Way we live our Lives

So, please don't miss this. It is right there in verse 21a:

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks...

... and this means that God has created a Universe in which we get the Blessings and He gets the Glory. And the Way God gets the Glory is by our exulting in Him as the all-sufficient Giver of all things.

Now some might ask:

"Why did Paul not stress here that the Failure of Mankind is the Failure to glorify God and trust Him? Why the stress on Gratitude and not Faith?"

... and I believe the Reason is that Trust, or Faith, is related to how God will deal with us in the Future.

But "*Natural Revelation*"- what we can learn about God from the created Universe (Nature)- does NOT communicate either clearly or fully- the Promises of God. The Promises of God come to us and are known by us- through the "*Special Revelation*" of Scripture. And that is why Trust or Faith in God's Promises becomes so central in how we glorify God according to the Scriptures.

Romans 4:18-22

18 In hope against hope he [Abraham] believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."

19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

22 Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

So here is the Truth:

- God exists
- And this God is both Eternal and infinitely Powerful
- And this eternal and powerful God is the Giver of every good Gift
- And therefore, our Reason for "being"; our Purpose for existing- our chief Duty; Privilege; and Honor and Blessing- the End for which we were created; and the

Commandment written on every Heart- is to display the Glory of this great God every day; hour by hour; as we live in the Exultation over His Bounty to us.

... and that is the Truth that ungodly people hate and suppress in Unrighteousness!

Suppressing the Truth in Unrighteousness

Why do we do this? The Key is given in the words, “**in unrighteousness.**” Verse 18:

“who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

So, why did Paul *not* say in verse 18, “*who suppress Ungodliness in Unrighteousness*”? The Answer is that the Truth being held down IS Godliness. It IS Righteousness. That’s what we have been talking about: Righteousness. Glorifying God and thanking God- that IS Righteousness. It would not mean much to say, “*who suppress Godliness in Unrighteousness.*”

But in the context of Scripture- it means a lot to say, “**who suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness.**” Unrighteousness is “Life orientation” that goes with Ungodliness- with rejecting the Truth of God’s Glory as Central to your Life. So, how does this work? There are several places where we see how it works. Let’s take one from Paul’s 2nd Letter (Epistle) to the Thessalonians and one from the teachings of Jesus.

In **2Thessalonians 2**, Paul is describing the End of the Age and the great Apostasy and Deception that will come on the world in those days. He says that the “lawless one” will come...

... with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (2Thessalonians 2:10)

Please note that Unrighteousness *deceives*- it *suppresses* the Truth. He continues that they are perishing **because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.**

So, those who are deceived in Unrighteousness do not receive the Love of the Truth. So, they suppress the Truth and evade it. They don’t love it. Why? He continues in verses 11–12:

2Thessalonians 2:11&12

11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

So, *why* did they *reject* the Truth; and *suppress* the Truth; and not *love* the Truth? Because they “**took pleasure in wickedness.**” When you love Sin- you simply CANNOT love the Truth. The Truth is too threatening. It threatens to take away your illicit Pleasures. I would venture to say that virtually all Falsehood comes from this: a stronger Affection for the “Pleasures of Sin”. That is what Unrighteousness is all about: loving Sin *more* than loving God and His Truth.

So, the issue of Truth is an Issue of the Heart way *before* it is an Issue of the Head. When the Heart is in love with “Self-exaltation” and “Independence” and the “Pleasures of Sin”- the

Mind will inevitably distort the Truth or suppress it in order to protect the Idols that the Heart has manufactured. Because left to itself- an unconverted Heart manufactures Idols every day. And that is why we need- not merely new Ideas or more Information- but a *new* Heart. And we do NOT need to simply get rid of our Passions; Desires; and Pleasures- those are the things that distinguish us from other created animals. It is what makes us to be “Human”. So, what we need are a brand- new set of Passions; Desires; and Pleasures. And that is what happens in the Miracle of the New Birth!

Please look again at what Jesus Himself said in **John 3:19-21**:

19 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Here, Jesus gives the very SAME Analysis of our sinful Hearts and WHY they suppress the Truth of God. Jesus said,

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world [Truth], and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

... so, this is a Love-and-Hate Issue.

Lost people don't simply “do” Darkness- they LOVE Darkness. Why? Jesus said it is because “their Deeds are Evil”. And that is simply another Way of saying, “*Those people are Unrighteous*”. And Divine Light and Truth would expose that Unrighteousness- while earthly Darkness conceals it. Therefore, we “suppress the Truth” in order to protect the Ugliness of our sinful Desires. So, we hide in the Darkness.

But Jesus went on in verse 20:

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

There it is! Why won't we come to the Light and embrace and love the Truth? Because of Unrighteousness. And in our Lost Condition- we *hate* the Light. So, in our fallen and Unsaved Condition- people do NOT merely seek to *avoid* the Light- we aren't “neutral” about the Light. Jesus said we HATE the Light! And because we hate this Divine Light- ALL Lost people seek to *evade* the Truth if they can. But if they can't *evade* it- then they will *twist* the Truth; *distort* it; and give it a Self-justifying *spin*. And that is what it means to “**suppress the Truth**”.

So here is the great Lesson to be learned: the Reason the mind of the Lost evades, twists, distorts, manipulates and suppresses the Truth of God is NOT because they are, somehow, “*mentally* Deficient”- but because they are “*morally* Deficient”. All Lost people suppress the Light of God's Glory and Power because they genuinely LOVE the Darkness of an “Independence” they *think* they have.

Lost people LOVE their Sins and the seeming Invincibility of their own Self-determination. But in order to Love that Fabrication- they HAVE to “suppress the Truth that God is God and that they are TOTALLY dependent on Him for EVERYTHING!”

And in **Romans 1:18**- the Apostle says this is WHY the Wrath of God is being poured out! This Suppression of the Truth of God’s Glory; and Power; and Deity; and Goodness (because of their love Affair with Unrighteousness) makes God Furious! And that should cause every thinking human on earth to tremble with Fear!

So, if the Condition of the Lost is this Bad- is there any Hope for Mankind? Yes! The Hope lies in verses 16&17:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

... in other words, because we are Unrighteous, and in our Unrighteousness, we suppress the Truth- our only Hope is that the Righteousness that God expects and demands from us- would be freely given to us. How? The spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ (that He earned by His sinless Life) MUST be imputed (credited) to us- by FAITH ALONE and NOT by our own religious Works! Other than that- we ARE Doomed and we have NO Hope!

2. Verses 20-24- The *First* Exchange

Romans 1:20-24

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

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

The first Exchange that sinful people engage in- is the *exchanging* of the Glory of God- for an “*Image*”. And the Apostle says here that the “*Image*” that the Glory of God is exchanged for- can be anything such as:

- Man
- Birds
- Animals (with four feet)
- Crawling Creatures (Snakes, Lizards, etc.)

So, what is an “*Image*”? The Dictionary defines an “*Image*” as:

1. A physical Likeness or Representation of a person, animal, or thing, photographed, painted, sculptured, or otherwise made visible.
2. An optical Counterpart or Appearance of an Object, as is produced by Reflection from a Mirror, Refraction by a Lens, or the Passage of luminous Rays through a small Aperture and their Reception on a Surface.

So, from that Definition- we can extrapolate and expand the Definition to include ANYTHING that detracts from; or that minimizes; or that replaces; or substitutes for God. So, an Image could also be:

- Money
- Possessions
- Earthly Power or Authority
- People we love and admire

Now the Bible says that God created Man, “in His Image and in His Likeness”:

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

So, what does it *mean* for God to have created Man, “in His Image and Likeness”? In order to fully understand WHY it was wrong for Man to exchange the Glory of God for an Image- we MUST first understand what it means for God to have created Man in His Image.

The *Uniqueness* of Man

The Bible declares that Man was *purposefully* and *determinedly* “made” by God. And that means that Man does *not* exist today due to accidental or random Events that are completely unrelated to one another.² The Scriptures clearly and repeatedly declare that Man was *created* by God: from the “*dust of the earth*” through a supernatural Miracle in one single “*Evening and*

² Darwinian Evolution

Morning” Division of Time that God called, “*a sixth Day*”. And no other part of the Universe was created like that. So, in every way- Man was *different; distinct; and unique* to everything else in the Universe that God made. And this “*uniqueness of Man*” is illustrated in five major Ways:

1. The Uniqueness of *How* Man was Created
2. The Triune Godhead was Present in Man’s Creation
3. The *Uniqueness* of Man’s “Being”
4. God *Commanded* Man to Subdue and Dominate the Earth
5. God holds Man Accountable

... so, let’s look at each one;

1. The Uniqueness of *How* Man was Created

In the Bible, the “*Day*” *begins* after Sundown and *ends* at the *beginning* of the next Sundown. So, a “*Day*” in the Bible is the 24 hour period of Time that *begins* at “*Evening*” and *ends* at “*Morning*”. So, on a *first* “*Day*”³ God *created* “*Light*”

Genesis 1:3

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

... which He did with His spoken Word.
On a *second* “*day*” God *created* “*Heaven*”⁴

Genesis 1:6&8a

6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

8 God called the expanse heaven...

... also by speaking.

On a *third* “*Day*” God *created* the “*Dry land*”; the “*Seas*”; and all “*Vegetation*”

Genesis 1:9; 10a; &11

9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas...

11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, *and* fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.

... also by speaking it into Existence.

On a *fourth* “*Day*” God created the Sun, Moon, and Stars

Genesis 1:14

³ The Articles, “A” or “The” were NOT in the Original Autographs and could be *interchangeable* as far as our Understanding goes.

⁴ There are at least three “*Heavens*” in the Bible: 1) The Atmosphere around the Earth; 2) What we call, “*Outer-space*”; and 3) The Dwelling Place of God.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

... again, by His spoken Word.
On a *fifth* "Day" God created fish and birds.

Genesis 1:20

Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."

... also by speaking.
And then on a *sixth* "Day"- *before God created Man*- God created the Land Animals.

Genesis 1:24

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.

... by speaking them into Existence.
Notice that in every case *except* Man- the things that were created by God came into Being *solely* through His spoken Word. Yet when God created Man- notice that He spoke *first* and said:

"Let Us make man..."

... but then notice how God went about to "make" this Man:

Genesis 1:27

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

... which makes Man to be *unique* among all of His Creation.
So, God was more *intimately* involved in Man's Creation than with anything else that He made. God spoke to create Man- yes. But then God also went about to "form" Man from the dust from the ground. And then after God had "formed" this Image- He *breathed* into Man's nostrils- what Moses infallibly called, the "*Breath of Life*"- which is the "*Soul*" (*Spirit*) of Man. And Job speaks quit a bit about the Soul or the Spirit of Man.

Job 4:13-21

**13 "Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,
14 Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake.
15 "Then a spirit passed by my face; The hair of my flesh bristled up.**

16 "It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; A form was before my eyes; There was silence, then I heard a voice:

17 'Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

18 'He puts no trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error.

19 'How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth!

20 'Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they perish forever.

21 'Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them? They die, yet without wisdom.'

Job 6:4

For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, Their poison my spirit drinks; The terrors of God are arrayed against me.

Job 7:9-11

9 "When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up.

10 "He will not return again to his house, Nor will his place know him anymore.

11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Job 10:12

You have granted me life and lovingkindness; And Your care has preserved my spirit.

Job 17:1

My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, The grave is ready for me.

Job 32:7&8

7 "I thought age should speak, And increased years should teach wisdom.

8 "But it is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

So, the *Distinction* by which God made Man was not Accidental nor Arbitrary- but rather shows a very deliberate and wise Effort by God Himself to create Man *differently*- on purpose- from everything else that was made- even the Animals! And this Difference or Distinction or Uniqueness- communicates the Concept of a "*Relationship*" that God *sovereignly* initiated with Man- that *did not then* and *does not now* exist between God and anything else in all of His Creation.

So, from the *Way* in which God made Man- we know that Man is unique; special; different; and set apart from everything else that was created by God.

2. The Triune Godhead was Present in the Creation of Man

When Moses quoted Almighty God in **Genesis 1:26** to say,

"Let Us make man..."

... he used the *plural* form of the noun for “God”. And there are only three possible Reasons for that:

1. It was an accepted Manner in which English Royalty spoke (and wrote) about themselves
2. God was referring to the Angels
3. God was addressing all three Persons of the Trinity (God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit)

The Problem with “*Option 1*” is that neither the Grammar of the Hebrew language itself nor the ancient Customs of the Jews follows this Rule. The Problem with “*Option 2*” is that this would suggest that Angels were *also* made in God’s Image- which is taught nowhere in Scripture. And that leaves only “*Option 3*” as an intelligent, reasoned Understanding of this Mystery. And to believe that all three Persons of the Trinity were present in Creation is also confirmed elsewhere in Scripture:

God the Holy Spirit was also there:

Genesis 1:2

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

And God the Son was also present at Creation:

John 1:1-3

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him (Jesus Christ) all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

To believe that God was referring to all three Persons of the Trinity in this statement about Man’s unique Creation also serves to connect Man’s Relationship with the *entirety* of the Godhead. Again- this is unique to Man- as no other part of Creation has this kind of Attachment to the Fullness of the Trinity.

3. The Uniqueness of Man’s “Being”

Not only is Man unique in the *Way* that God made him; and in the fact that only Man has a Relationship with all three Persons of the Trinity- but Man is also different from anything else in Creation through the *uniqueness* of his “Being”. For example- when God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit said,

“Let Us make man...”

... He then went on to say *how* He was going to make Man:

Genesis 1:26b&27

26 ... in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Nothing else in all of the Inspired Record of Creation was created in the "Image" and "Likeness" of God- except Man. Once again- Man is *unique* in this Truth; and is therefore, said to bear the "*Imago Dei*" (Latin: *The Image/Face of God*). And part of what it actually means when we say that Man was made in God's Image is found in eight Aspects of Man that are completely *unique* to him:

1. Man's "Personality"
2. Man's "Spirituality"
3. Man's Ability to "Love" and "Enjoy" God
4. Man's "Self Determination" or "Will"
5. Man's "Commission to "Subdue" and "Rule Over" the Earth
6. Man's "Immortality"
7. Man's "Behavior" was *always* Restricted
8. God Holds Man Accountable

Let's look at each one briefly.

1. Man's "Personality"

Man was *not* created as a Machine that was simply "programmed" to *respond* to certain stimuli; nor was he created as a mere animal that is "driven" by an unconscious "Instinct". Man was originally created as a full- grown, mature, Adult- who had no sinful Past to be forgiven of; no Childhood; and who did not go through Adolescence. Man was created as a thinking; personal; and self- conscious Creature.

Genesis 2:7

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

2. Man's "Spirituality"

Unlike anything else in all Creation- Man was created with the very "Image" of the immortal God stamped on his Soul. So, what does that mean since God the Father is "*Immaterial*" meaning He has no physical Body? It *primarily* means that Man is fully a *spiritual* Being like his Creator. So, Man has a Soul- a Spirit- that was *originally* given to him at the Moment God created him.

Genesis 1:26&27

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

3. Man's Ability to "Love" and "Enjoy" God

Unlike the rest of Creation- that carries out God's Will- *unconsciously*- Man was *originally* gifted by God with a real and genuine capacity to *know* God; to *love* God; and to enjoy God- forever. And, of all God's Creation- ONLY Man has the Ability (and Desire) to *fellowship* with God; and to *respond* to God with glad Obedience; Worship; and Love- which allowed Man to *originally* experience the fullness of Joy himself.

Unlike the mountains; stars; galaxies; subatomic particles; or other Land-animals- Man was *originally* given the capacity to truly know and understand *some* important Aspects about the one true living God. But as we seek to grasp that Truth- we must always keep in mind that Man has NEVER known *everything* about God. The "*Finite*" can never fully grasp the "*Infinite*". But Man WAS able to know *enough* about God to alter his Behavior; and submit to Him- *gladly*. Man was also able to receive Instruction and Revelation from God.

Genesis 2:19&20a

19 Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field ...

4. Man's "Self Determination" or "Will"

In the Beginning- *before* the Fall- both Adam and Eve were created by God with a "Will". They were able to *consciously* make Choices that were unhindered and "Free" in the *truest* sense of that word. Before the Fall- Man possessed no internal Lust that had to respond to Temptation- with lawless Acts (Sin). So, in the Beginning Man was two things:

1. He was able to Sin
2. He was able to NOT Sin.⁵

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

5. Man's Commission to "Subdue" and "Rule Over" the Earth

⁵ We don't know WHY Adam WANTED to sin against God. All we know is that he did. The Bible is silent, however about WHY. We do know that, unlike us, before he sinned- Adam did NOT have a "fallen Nature" that satan could take advantage of- with Temptation.

Unlike any other Animal that God made- Man was given the Authority (and Power) by God to *subdue* the Earth and to “rule over it.”

Genesis 1:26-31

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

... so, God created the world- in such a way- that for the earth to be productive and useful and for it to be able to fulfill God’s Will- Man must subdue it and rule over it. Left to itself- the earth is deadly; unproductive; and inefficient. In order for the planet to be useful to God’s Glory (and Man’s benefit) it must be subdued and governed by Man.

Yet Man’s Authority to “subdue” and to “rule over” the earth was ALWAYS as a “Steward” over that which belonged solely to God- and NEVER as an Owner. Man was also told to “rule over” the Earth in accord with God’s written Instructions (Scripture). So, even BEFORE the Fall- Man was NEVER in complete Authority over *anything*. Man *originally* operated as a happy “Slave” tasked with helping the Earth to function in accord with the Will and Decree of God.

6. Man’s “Immortality”

Man was “*unlike* God” in that he had a precise Beginning (the Moment he was created) but he was “*like* God” in that Man was given an *immortal* “Soul” that *would not* and *could not* die. Originally, this Immortality included his *physical* Body as well. (**Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:17**)

7. Man’s Behavior was Always *Restricted*

There has never been a time when Man was completely “*Free*” or “*Autonomous*” (Self-ruled). Man has ALWAYS been “*Theonomous*” (God-ruled). So, at no time- before or after the Fall- has Man been the “*Master of my Fate*” or the “*Captain of my Soul*”⁶. Such “*absolute* Freedom” is a Myth. Even before the Fall- God *limited* Man. And God assigned him with specific Duties; and *always* restricted his Behavior.

⁶ These two phrases came from the Poem, “*Invictus*”(Latin for “*Unconquered*”) by William Ernest Henley (1849-1903)in 1875 and originally published in 1888.

8. God Always Holds Man “Accountable”

Again, unlike anything else that God made- Man is held responsible or accountable by God for what God requires from him. Man is *always* and is *in all ways* fully Responsible for his Actions; his Thoughts; his Intentions; and his Deeds. And because this is true- God *rewards* Man for his willful and joyful Obedience; and *punishes* Man for his rebellious Disobedience.

2Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

A Warning About Man and Deity

Even though it is true that Man is *unique* from everything else in Creation; and even though it is also true that God made Man to have a Relationship with Himself- no one should draw the Conclusion that because of this- Man is “*like God*” in that he is in any way Deity *before* the Fall; *after* the Fall; *after* Salvation; or even in Heaven.

The Bible is crystal clear about this Subject. Man was *never* Deity; and Man *will never be* Deity. Man is *not* “deified” through Salvation in Jesus Christ; and neither will Man become *deified* in Heaven. The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit within Man also does *not* confer upon Man any form of Deity or Divinity.

All Teaching- from any Source- either Historic or Modern- that assigns Deity or Divinity to Man in any way- is Evil; Blasphemous; False; Unbiblical; and Contrary to everything the Bible teaches about both God and Man.

Man is Unique- but not Alone

Although the Bible teaches that Man is *unique*- it *also* teaches that Man is not alone. The Man God created shares a common Purpose with the other elements of God’s Creation.

Psalms 104:31

**Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;
Let the LORD be glad in His works;**

Romans 11:36

**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever.
Amen.**

Colossians 1:16-20

16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

19 For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

3. Verses 21-24: The *First* Abandonment

Romans 1:21-24

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

As we have discovered- from **Romans 1:18** all the Way down to **3:31**- the Apostle is addressing a very important theological Issue that the Jews had brought up back in the 1st Century:

How can God forgive patently guilty Sinners and remain Righteous Himself?

... and this Issue was based on a time-tested Truth about God's "Justice" that He instituted through Moses in the Law of God:

Exodus 21:12-36

12 He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.

13 But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee.

14 If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.

15 He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

16 He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.

17 He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

18 If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but remains in bed,

19 if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed.

20 If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished.

21 If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property.

22 If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide.

23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,

24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

26 If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye.

27 And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.

28 If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.

29 If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.

30 If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him.

31 Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule.

32 If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

33 If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it,

34 the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his.

35 If one man's ox hurts another's so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its price equally; and also they shall divide the dead ox.

36 Or if it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall become his.

So, we see that God desired that the guilty person **MUST** be punished in some Way. So, the Jew protested "*Justification by Faith alone*"- because to teach that guilty rebels may "*go free*" (be saved) without ANY Punishment from God- simply by Believing- and NOT by earning it- (by making Restitution) was to attack what God had established through Moses and was therefore- NOT "*of God*".

Then as the Law of God was applied to everyday Life- there were Refinements and Summaries made such as:

Proverbs 17:15

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.

Ezekiel 18:20

The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

So, how could God forgive Sinners (*especially* Gentile Sinners) and NOT violate His own Standard of Justice? That is the Issue that *begins* with the Problem of the Wrath of God in **Romans 1:18&19:**

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

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

.... and ends with the Answer in **Romans 3:21-31** that says:

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;
26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.
28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,
30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.
31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

But here in **Romans 21-24**- we see a very interesting Sin- the “exchanging of the Glory of God for idols” that brought about a very interesting Judgment from God- the “*Judgment of Abandonment*”.

“Therefore God gave them over ...”

Now the Wrath of God is a very frightening Subject. And since God is Omnipotent (Almighty) His Judgments cause infinitely MORE Harm to people than the Wrath of Man. But as we have spent a lot of time studying God Himself (Theology Proper)- we have found that there are different “Kinds” or “Types” of the Wrath of God. And among them are:

- Eternal Wrath (Hell)
- Eschatological Wrath (End-time Wrath)
- Cataclysmic Wrath
- Sowing and Reaping Wrath (Consequential Wrath)

But there is another “Kind” or “Type” of God’s Wrath and that is the Wrath that we see here in this Passage. And that is the “*Wrath of Abandonment*”. And this particular Kind or Type of Wrath is exhibited by God when He “turns His back” on a Person; a Group; a Society; a Nation; or even an entire Civilization!

And one of the most heart-breaking Events that exists in all the Scriptures that illustrates this Kind of Judgment is given with one of the ancient Judges of Israel named, “Samson”. And unlike the Marvel or DC super-heroes- and even unlike the mythical Hercules (Heracles)- Samson

actually existed. But let's read about the Moment when God judged this man for his Sin and abandoned him:

Judges 16:18-21

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands.

19 She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him.

20 She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

21 Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.

So, Samson's Sin of Fornication as well as marrying a Gentile (unbelieving) woman-caused God to judge him by leaving or abandoning him to his own Desires.

Judges 16:1

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

Judges 16:4

After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

And Samson did all of this- even though his Father warned him.

Judges 14:1-3

1 Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."

Now in the Economy of God- there were two things going on here at the same Time. And so, now God is going to *use* that which He *hates*. He is going to *passively* allow Sin to be carried out- so that He may *powerfully* and *actively* accomplish His Will. And even though this is very Mysterious- it is true; and it is biblical.

Most of the Time- God moves to *defeat* and *destroy* the Evil that is in the heart of Man. But there are Times- when God *allows* what He *hates*. Because the very next verse says,

Judges 14:4

However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

Normally, God sovereignly works to *restrain* “Evil” in the world- precisely because “Evil” normally works *against* God and His Will. And that means that “Evil” can be defined as:

... any Power; Force; Desire; Thought; Person; or Act that works against or that resists God and His Will; or anything that is *benefitted* when God and/or His Will is opposed.

But we must always keep in mind that God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the Time. And that means that God is absolutely Sovereign over Evil and all of its various manifestations. And that means that Evil *cannot* ultimately defeat God.

But it also means that, periodically, God *uses* Evil for His own Glory. And so, the Bible also teaches that there are Times when God sovereignly “steps aside” and He passively “allows” sinful people to do what is already in their heart to do. But the ONLY reason God does that- is because by “allowing” the “Evil” to be carried out; by those people; at that Time; in that amount- a much greater “Good” will come to pass- that would NOT have happened- if God had not allowed the Evil.

So, even though God *hates* Evil and will ALWAYS judge it- He sometimes *uses* Evil to further His Good Goals. But even when God chooses to *use* Evil in this Way- He sovereignly “controls” the Evil- so that it is ONLY carried out to the extent that God desires.

We must remember what the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem said in **James 1:13-16:**

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

So, God CANNOT be tempted with “Evil”. And that means “Evil” is NEVER *attractive* to God because God does NOT have a “fallen Nature” that contains various sinful Urges; Inclinations; and Desires (Lusts)- residing in it. But we DO! And so, these various LUSTS (that satan *capitalizes* on through his Temptations)- ALREADY exist within the Flesh of ALL humans born after the Fall. They are *inherent* in the Flesh of ALL people born after Adam sinned.

So, when satan tempts us to sin- he is simply giving us an Opportunity to do what our Flesh wants to do anyway. That is what James meant when he said,

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

The Lust that satan’s Temptation “revealed”; and that “carried the individual away”; and “enticed” him- was “his *own* Lust”. It belongs to that individual; and is part of his own, personal, inherent, fallen Nature. So, the individual had that particular Lust within his Flesh BEFORE satan tempted him. So, while it is true that satan can’t MAKE or FORCE anyone to sin- it is also

true that satan has been given the Power to present us with an Opportunity to utilize; bring forth; do; or manifest the Lust that is already in our depraved; sinful; and fallen Flesh. And that “Presentation” is what is called, “Temptation”.

But according to verse 14- Evil ALREADY exists inside the individual person as a direct Result of him being “Fallen”. So, that Evil; that Lust; that sinful Desire- is *his*. He *owns* it. It is a part of WHO that individual really is (Nature).

Now the Bible is crystal clear about this:

... God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

... yet the Bible is also crystal clear to teach us that God DOES “try” us. He “tests” us!

So, God sovereignly places His people into certain Situations and Circumstances (of God’s own Choosing)- to reveal how Strong (or Weak) our Love and Devotion to God; as well as our Faith in God and in what He has said- really is.

But what is interesting about this Issue is that the Greek word that was translated into English as “Tempt” or “Temptation” is the very SAME word used for the English words, “Test” or “Try”. So, they mean the SAME thing! So, how do we reconcile the Reality that, on the one hand- God does NOT tempt anyone- but on the other hand- God tries and tests EVERYONE?

Since God testing and trying someone flows out from the SAME word as God tempting His people- what is the Difference? The Difference is in the Intent. ALL Temptation has- as its *ultimate* Goal- for that individual to sin against God. That is satan’s ultimate Goal- for that individual to dishonor God and sin against Him. But the *ultimate* Goal of God in the testing and trying of His people- is in them remaining Faithful and NOT sinning.

But make no mistake about it- ALL “Testing” and “Trying” involves Sin. And all Testing and Trying utilizes Evil; and Wickedness; and other things that God hates; and things He will eventually judge and damn.

So, God wanted to use Samson to judge the evil Philistines- even though all that Samson wanted- was to be with a Woman. And so, God’s Word says,

Judges 14:4

However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

It was God Will for Samson to judge the Philistines. But it was NOT God’s Will that Samson sin against God- even when trying to do God’s Will. But instead of stopping Samson (which He could)- God sovereignly and passively allowed Samson to sin- and judged him for it. But in judging Samson- God’s Will to judge the Philistines was also accomplished.

Judges 16:23-31

23 Now the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice, for they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands.”

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, for they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hands, Even the destroyer of our country, Who has slain many of us.”

25 It so happened when they were in high spirits, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may amuse us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.

26 Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, “Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.”

27 Now the house was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And about 3,000 men and women were on the roof looking on while Samson was amusing them.

28 Then Samson called to the Lord and said, “O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.”

29 Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.

31 Then his brothers and all his father’s household came down, took him, brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. Thus he had judged Israel twenty years.

So, in judging Samson by “abandoning him”- God’s Will to destroy the Philistines was carried out.

Also, in the Life of Job- we see God using evil and wicked men; as well as horrific “Acts of God”- that He *allowed* to come on Job- to prove that Job’s Love for God was *genuine*; and was NOT based on the Fact that God had favored him in many Ways. So, while satan’s Desire was to *tempt* this man to sin against God- God’s Desire- AT THE SAME TIME- was to *try* and *test* Job- to *prove* that he loved God MORE than He loved the Blessings God had given him.

So, from satan’s Position- he was absolutely *tempting* Job to sin. But from God’s Position- our Lord was *trying* and *testing* Job- WITH THE SAME ISSUES- to prove *unmistakably*, that Job’s Salvation was real!

But in order to do that- God *used* what He *hated*. God *allowed* what He has *forbidden*. And God *passively* “set back” and gave satan Permission to bring forth- what God has promised to damn. So, in **Job 1:8-12** we read:

8 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

9 Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing?”

10 “Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

11 “But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”

12 Then the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

Now when God said,

Behold, all that he has is in your power...

... this is God “setting back”; or “passively allowing” satan to *afflict* Job; and permitting him to *tempt* Job to “**curse You to Your face**”.

But even in this “passive Allowance”- God is absolutely Sovereign. And so, God gave satan one caveat to this “Allowance”. God *restricted* satan’s Ability to bring Evil to Job.

... only do not put forth your hand on him.”

So, God is “sitting back” and *allowing* satan to attack Job; and to take ALL that Job had been given (by God). Yet just before satan leaves God’s Presence- God *forbids* satan to touch Job’s person. Now look at what happened as a Result of this Meeting between God and the devil from **Job 1:13-19**:

13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,

14 a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,

15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,

19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

So, Job has now lost EVERYTHING God had given him- *including* his ten Children! But what was Job’s Response to all this Testing/Temptation?

Job 1:20&21

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

21 He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Now some might say that Job was simply delirious; and spoke this when his mind was so overcome with Grief and Agony that he didn’t know what he was saying. But whoever wrote this Book (Job didn’t write this Book/Jeremiah?)- gave an infallible Commentary in the very next verse, where he said,

Job 1:22

Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

So, two things were happening here- AT THE SAME TIME and WITH THE SAME ISSUES:

1. Satan was “tempting” Job to sin against God
2. God was “trying/testing” Job to verify that his Salvation was Real and Permanent

But God wasn’t finished displaying the Reality and Eternality of genuine Salvation- so, He had another Confrontation with satan:

Job 2:3-6

3 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.”

4 Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

5 “However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.”

6 So the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”

Once again, God is giving satan Permission to attack Job- with one major Restriction:

... **“Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”**

... and now look at what happened as a Result of this Confrontation with God:

Job 2:7

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Now even though this Book was written at some point AFTER Job lived (probably by Jeremiah)- Job himself lived during the “*Days of the Patriarchs*”. How do we know that? Because Job’s Wealth was measured in land and livestock Holdings rather than in Money and Investments.

But after satan had taken everything he owned- Job went from being fabulously Wealthy to being a Pauper. And he went from having ten Children to having none. So, satan was *tempting* Job to sin against God while- AT THE SAME TIME and WITH THE SAME ISSUES- the Lord was *testing/trying* Job to prove that the Love that God had gifted Job with- empowered him to love God MORE than anything else! And, by God’s Grace, Job passed that Test!

But now the Temptation and Test was about his own Person. God had given satan Permission to rob Job of his Health; and this man- who had already lost EVERYTHING he owned- *including* his ten Children- now had ...

... sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

... so, how would Job respond to this?

Was God's Grace strong enough to keep him? Was this Attack against Job going to be his ruin? The Bible tells us how Job responded to this latest Attack:

Job 2:8

And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.

.. and this Time- even his dear Wife had reached the End of her Endurance and told him to give up:

Job 2:9

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"

... yet Job remained Steadfast and told his Wife:

Job 1:10b

... "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"

Those of us who follow Jesus in the 21st Century have many Advantages. We have 2,000 years of Church History- that is filled with the written Wisdom of countless Teachers, Preachers, as well as Laymen- who can encourage and strengthen us. We have 6,000 years of Human History- both the Good and the Bad to learn from. But most of all, we have 66 Books that are the inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word of the living God to teach us the fullness of Divine Truth.

But Job had NONE of that. And yet, his Theology was correct- about the Sovereignty of God as well as the Purpose behind Human Suffering and he said,

Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?

Job understood that there are Times when God *uses* what He *hates*; and He *allows* "Evil" to seemingly Triumph. But the ONLY Reason God does that- is so that an *infinitely* greater "Good" will come to pass- that would NOT have come to pass had God not allowed the "Evil"- *first!* So, even though it seems that satan is winning- God is behind; and above; and underneath it all- *guiding* the "Evil" and *governing* it- PERFECTLY- so that His glorious "Good" can come!

Another example of the "*Judgment of Abandonment*" is found in **Judges 10:11-14** - when God said this to the sons of Israel:

11 The Lord said to the sons of Israel, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the sons of Ammon, and the Philistines?"

12 "Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hands."

13 “Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer deliver you.

14 “Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress.”

... this is God saying, “*I’m done with you! You’re on your own!*”

In **Proverbs 1:24-31** we see a *similar* Statement from God:

24 “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;

25 And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof;

26 I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,

27 When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you.

28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,

29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord.

30 “They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof.

31 “So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.

In **Hosea 4:17**, the Prophet spoke for God and issued out the “*Judgment of Abandonment*” when he said,

Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone.

There comes a time when God *abandons* people and no longer “deals” with them. He no longer brings Conviction to them. He lets a people go and abandons them go to the Consequences of their own sinful Choices. They continually refuse to accept His counsel; they spurn all His Reproof; they ignore His Warnings; and so, God allows them to eat the fruit of their own Choices and to be satisfied with the wicked Devices they have chosen.

The “Judgment of Abandonment” is present when you see or hear evil people publicly, openly, and continually rejoice in their Sin and Rebellion. They are no longer ashamed. They are no longer guilt- ridden. They are no longer embarrassed. And they no longer seek to be “healed”; or “delivered”; or “rescued”; or “saved” from their Sin. They rejoice because they are allowed to sin with abandon- with, seemingly, no Repercussions from God. And the Absence of any visible Divine Judgment- *emboldens* them to sin even more!

Now they will absolutely be damned by God- at some later point. But there is no longer any “acknowledgement of God”; no “fear of the Lord”; no “reverential Respect” of God in their minds or hearts. No Concept that what they are doing is wrong; and sinful; and putting them underneath the Damnation of God.

In **Matthew 15:12-14**- Jesus talked with the Disciples about the Pharisees and said,

12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

... where the phrase, "**Let them alone**" is the frightening "*Judgment of Abandonment*".

It is truly terrifying to think about this. Terrifying to think that we might be abandoned by God; that the Opportunity for Salvation might be past; that the Day of Visitation is over; and that God's Grace has passed us by.

The verses that we have looked at relate to an individual, in the case of Samson. But they also relate to a Group such as the Pharisees; or to an entire Nation- such as ancient Israel.

So, I think it's very relevant to talk about this because I'm going to try to show you that I'm convinced that God has *abandoned* our Nation. God has *abandoned* America to the Effects of its sinful Choices.

But this isn't the first Nation that it's happened to. History reveals that God has done this several times. For example, in **The Acts 14:16** the Apostle Paul said,

In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

... which means- God allowed those Nations to sin with impunity- and did NOT stop them. And all that that "Freedom" did- was to bring about an even greater Damnation.

This is why we periodically uncover the ruins of entire Civilizations that no longer exist. Something happened to those people to utterly destroy them off the face of the whole earth! And all that is left are the ruins of a once great Empire or Civilization. Some type of terrible Judgment fell on them- so they are no more. Was this the "Judgment of Abandonment"? Perhaps. But *something* happened that utterly *annihilated* those people!

The Reality is that History teaches us that MOST Nations "go their own way". And at some point- God intervenes and they are now extinct. And I am sorely afraid that, like the nations of Old- we are following the same Cycle of *having* the Truth; then not *loving* the Truth; then *rejecting* the Truth; then actively rebelling *against* the Truth- and, finally, being *abandoned* by God.

C.S. Lewis was writing in his book, "*The Problem of Pain*", and he wrote this.

"The Lost enjoy forever the horrible Freedom they have demanded; and are therefore self-Enslaved!"

There is a point when God will *abandon* Sinners to their own Choices; and the Consequences of those Choices. And just what is this "abandoning Act" on God's Part? It is the *removal* of what Theologians call, "restraining Grace". It is when God "lets go" and "turns a – a Society over" to its own sinful "Freedoms" and the Results of those so-called Freedoms. And no Scripture more directly confronts this Abandonment and its Consequences than **Romans 1** does.

In this Chapter lies the most graphic and the most comprehensive Discussion of what it means to be "abandoned by God". And it is the best Passage that I know of to explain the moral Chaos and the Confusion that we experience in our own Nation at this very time. God's Wrath is already at work in our Culture. We're not waiting for it; we are not heading into it; we are currently experiencing it!

Now here in **Romans**- we see that this "*Judgment of Abandonment*" is seen three different times:

1. **Therefore God gave them over (v. 24)**
2. **For this reason God gave them over (v. 26)**
3. **And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over (v. 28)**

In all three Events- the Greek word, "*paradidomi*" is used- which is a term used for judicial Actions- such as when a Prisoner is "given over" to a Warden of the Jail by a Judge for him to carrying out the "*Sentence of Justice*" placed on him. So, when God "*gives them over*"- He is *abandoning* those people to satan- so he can entice them into more and more Sin. Yet because God has *abandoned* them- the Grace of God that normally *restricts* sinful Behavior has been lifted; and those people have no Defense against the "**Schemes of the Devil**".

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

When the "*Judgment of Abandonment*" falls- there is a "*depriving*" of the restraining Grace of God. And the Result is that Sin runs rampant through a Society- and yet, there is NO Conviction and NO Repentance. Instead, what replaces the "restraining Grace" is a sinful "Boldness" that *encourages* the individual to sin against God even more. Since God didn't damn them for their Sin; and since they weren't even convicted- the abandoned person feels *empowered* to even *greater* Wickedness!

What is *unique* about this particular Type of Judgment is that Sin is both the Cause as well as the Effect. Sin brought about this Judgment and the Result of the Judgment is even MORE Sin! So, Sin is both the Reason and the Result. Sin is the Genesis and Sin is the Consequence.

Look again at verse 24:

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Now when you see the word, "*Therefore*" at the beginning of a Verse- it is a word that is normally used in a *legal* Statement. And Paul was very fond of using it. For example, in many legal Documents- you have line after line that says,

Whereas...

Whereas...

Whereas...

... and then you have a "concluding Statement" that is *predicated* by all of those "*Whereas*" Statements. And the "concluding Statement" begins with the word, "*Therefore*".

So, a Verse that begins with "*Therefore*" or even just "*For*"- normally means:

“Since all I just told you in the preceding verses is true- here is the Sum or the Conclusion of the matter.”

... and Verse 24 begins with “*Therefore*”.

So, in order to understand WHY God issued His “Judgment of Abandonment”- we need to go backward. And when we do that, we find WHY God judged those people:

Romans 1:18b-23

18 ... all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

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

21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

So, verses 18b-23 give us the various Sins that *precipitated* God issuing out His frightening “*Judgment of Abandonment*”:

- They suppressed the Truth (they did NOT value the Truth)
- They rejected what they knew about God (they did NOT value God)
- They knew God but did NOT honor Him as God (they devalued God)
- They were NOT grateful or thankful because they knew God (they devalued the Knowledge of God)
- They exchanged the Glory of God for Images (Idols)

When the “*Judgment of Abandonment*” goes into action- which is listed here as “God gave them over”- it follows three *sequential* Steps. The word, “**Therefore,**” connects what Paul says here to the prior Passage. And the prior Passage has, as its leading Statement,

“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven...”

... and then Paul lists three “*Abandonments*” by God.

Romans 1:24

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Romans 1:26

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

Romans 1:28

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

It is impossible to read **Romans 1:18-32** with any degree of honesty and not see that the Judgment of God as He abandons a People has a very strong *sexual* Connotation to it. And *specifically*, it deals with sexual Perversities or Deviations.

Now the Reason these Acts are called, “*Perversions*” or “*Deviations*” is because there is a Standard of Behavior that God has *already* established as it pertains to human Sexuality. God Himself created sexual Union. It was His Idea. And that means it isn’t “dirty” or “nasty” or “evil”. Sexual Union, when carried out correctly- is a great Blessing and Comfort to God’s people.

But God is *particularly* angered by that Act of Intimacy being misused. There are *more* Prohibitions to sexual Sins in the Bible than any other. And there are also *more* Warnings against those sexual Sins than any other. So, sexual Purity is very Important to God.

But the Acts listed in **Romans 1**- *deviate* from that perfect Standard of Behavior. And that Standard began when God gave Moses the Law:

Leviticus 18

1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the Lord your God.

3 ‘You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.

4 ‘You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God.

5 ‘So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.

6 ‘None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the Lord.

7 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother; you are not to uncover her nakedness.

8 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s wife; it is your father’s nakedness.

9 ‘The nakedness of your sister, either your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether born at home or born outside, their nakedness you shall not uncover.

10 ‘The nakedness of your son’s daughter or your daughter’s daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for their nakedness is yours.

11 ‘The nakedness of your father’s wife’s daughter, born to your father, she is your sister, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

12 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s sister; she is your father’s blood relative.

13 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister, for she is your mother’s blood relative.

14 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s brother; you shall not approach his wife, she is your aunt.

15 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son’s wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

16 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; it is your brother’s nakedness.

17 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, nor shall you take her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter, to uncover her nakedness; they are blood relatives. It is lewdness.

18 ‘You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.

19 ‘Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity.

20 ‘You shall not have intercourse with your neighbor’s wife, to be defiled with her.

21 ‘You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.

22 ‘You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.

23 ‘Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

24 ‘Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.

25 ‘For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.

26 ‘But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you

27 (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled);

28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you.

29 ‘For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.

30 ‘Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.’”

Specifically, these Practices are categorically condemned by God:

- Sexual Intimacy between “blood” Relatives (verse 6)
- Sexual Intimacy between Father and Child or Mother and Child (verse 7)
- Sexual Intimacy between a Child and his Step- Mother (verse 8)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Sister (verse 9)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Daughter (verse 10)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Step-Sister (verse 11)
- Sexual Intimacy with an Uncle or Aunt (verses 12-14)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Daughter-in-Law (verse 15)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Sister-in-Law (verse 16)
- Sexual Intimacy with a Mother and Daughter together (verse 17)
- Sexual Intimacy (Marriage) with the Sister of your Wife (verse 18)

- Sexual Intimacy with any Woman during her “Time” (verse 19)
- Sexual Intimacy with your Neighbor’s Wife (verse 20)
- Sacrificing your Children to false gods (verse 21)
- Sexual Intimacy between Men (verse 22)
- Sexual Intimacy with an Animal (verse 23)

... and you will also notice that the Authority by which God condemned those Acts is Himself:

Leviticus 18:2

Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 18:4-6

4 ‘You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God.

5 ‘So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.

6 ‘None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the Lord.

Leviticus 18:21

You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.

Leviticus 18:30

Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.

You will also notice that it was the fact that both the ancient land of Egypt as well as the Land of Canaan WERE *actively* engaged in these prohibited Acts that was the Reason God destroyed them.

Leviticus 18:3

You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.

Leviticus 18:24&25

24 ‘Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.

25 ‘For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.

... and then God promised the Children of Israel that if they began to engage in thee prohibited Acts- God would destroy them, too.

Leviticus 18:26-29

26 ‘But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you
27 (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled);
28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you.
29 ‘For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.

But you will notice that in **Romans 1:18-32**- these prohibited Practices are the very Acts that people begin to engage in- when God *abandons* them. And that tells us that the End Result of God abandoning any People- is their *ultimate* Judgment in Hell.

The people who have *already* exchanged the Glory of God for Idols; and who have *already* been abandoned by God- “**in the lusts of their hearts to impurity**” are now engaged in “dishonoring their own bodies” through engaging in those *prohibited* Practices.

So, the natural and normal Resistance that all Humanity has- that *stops* them from engaging in things that are Dangerous or Harmful or that are “morally Forbidden”- is now gone. And this new- found “Freedom” emboldens them to “push the envelope” as it regards their own physical bodies.

The “restraining Grace” that normally keeps fallen Man from sinning themselves into total Annihilation- is being *gradually* removed from these people. And yet, the Progression of God’s Abandonment is *gradual*. And that is the Mercy of God- which is *always* calling people to repent of Sin- so they may love and obey God- so that He alone is glorified; and they personally attain to the fullness of their own Joy.

Also, in any given Society- ALL of the people are NOT being judged. God *usually* has a “remnant” of people within every Culture, Civilization, and Nation that has had the Gospel preached to them- who love God; and who are endeavoring to remain Faithful, Fruitful, and Busy in the Work of the Lord. And so, among that remnant- the restraining Grace of God remains- even though all around them- the “Lusts of the Heart to Impurity” of those people being judged- are becoming more and more dominant. And the outward Manifestation that those inward Lusts are there- and those people are being abandoned by God- is seen in the Phenomenon that they become more and more relaxed and comfortable in “dishonoring their bodies”.

4. The Second Exchange and Abandonment Romans 1:25-27

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

So, the *first* Abandonment by God of those people *undoes* what God the Holy Spirit *does* to God's people. Normally, God the Holy Spirit *dwells continually* inside of each Believer. And this is a New Covenant Reality that the Old Testament saints didn't have. But they *did* look *forward* to it. So, they *prophesied* about it.

Leviticus 26:11&12

11 'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you.

12 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

Exodus 29:45-46

45 "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God.

46 "They shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

Now, even though God spoke this to Moses- the ancient Jew did NOT enjoy the *continual* "Indwelling" of the Holy Spirit. A Study of the Old Testament will reveal that God the Holy Spirit "came" to the Jew- but then He left. He "fell" on them- but He went back up. He was *with* them; *for* them; and *all around* them. But He did NOT *dwell continually* IN them. That Blessing is reserved for those who come to God through Jesus Christ in the New Covenant.

John 1:29-34

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

It was the *Uniqueness* of God the Holy Spirit "remaining" on Jesus that gave John the Baptist the Confidence to say this about Him,

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

So, it was that *permanent* Indwelling of the third Person of the Trinity that identified the true Messiah- Jesus, the Christ, to John.

But now, under the infinitely superior New Covenant- each Believer has that SAME continual Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them that Jesus had. Yet the World is fallen and sinful. And so, we are a redeemed People, who strive to obey God but who live in a pagan World that has no Desire at all to obey Him. And that Difference was displayed for us in the Old Testament when the Children of Israel were living in a pagan Land. And it is that Difference that *creates* the ongoing Tension between saved people and the Lost.

Romans 8:1-14

1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh

—

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

2Corinthians 6:16b

... we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

Galatians 5:13-26

13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

The Mystery of this Life is NOT, "*Why do things sometimes go Wrong?*" The Mystery is, "*Why does anything ever go Right?*" With as much Sin that is in as many people- the Wonder is why things don't simply just spin off into Oblivion. There seems to be some form of a Barrier; a Fence; a restraining Power that dwells in every heart- even the Lost that, while NOT saving everyone, nevertheless keeps Society in general from destroying itself.

That Barrier is what is lifted or removed when God abandons a People. And without that restraining Grace- they feel the Liberty to do "what is right in their own eyes".

So, there are two Forces at work in the earth. There are people who love God and those who don't. And they dwell with each other and interact with each other every day. But they have very different Goals; and they labor for radically different Objectives.

But the Gift of the third Person of the Trinity- God the Holy Spirit- in the New Covenant is that He will dwell continually in every Believer- to accomplish the Goals that Jesus set forth in **John 14:16&17:**

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

... so, Jesus prayed to the Father and the Father sent the “Helper”- God the Holy Spirit to “be with us forever”. And this Helper will, “**abide[s] with you and will be in you**”. But there is MORE! In **John 14:26**, Jesus said,

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Over the Centuries, this Promise by Jesus has been taken out of Context. The Promise that the Helper would “**teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**” is NOT an Excuse for us to NOT read and study the Bible. Because *this* particular Promise from **John 14:26**- was made- *exclusively*- to the Apostles. How do we know that to be true? Because the Apostles did NOT have the New Testament to read and study. Why? Because they were used by God to write them! And it was very Important for them to know that they would NOT be “on their own” when it came time to write the 27 Books of the New Testament. Jesus and God the Holy Spirit would guide them into writing- *exactly*- what Jesus had taught them while He was here.

The Command and Promise to us- is to read and study the 66 Books that God the Holy Spirit “moved” on both the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament Apostles (and those who were designated to write for them). God used the Apostles to not only write the four Accounts of Jesus in the Gospel Records; but to also write the “new” didactic Books (Epistles) that took the Place of the first five Books of Moses as to how Believers are to live their daily Lives.

But one of the most important things that the Apostles gave to us- is their Interpretation of what the Old Testament Passages that they quoted in their Books- meant. And what is important about this- is that that Interpretation is also Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible. And that means that once the Apostle interpreted an Old Testament Passage in a New Testament Book- THAT is what that Passage means; and it *cannot* mean anything else.

The Great Schism of 1054AD

During the early Days of the Church- Christianity basically kept within the Boundaries of the Roman Empire. But the Empire had grown so large- that it simply couldn’t be managed fully from a single city (Rome). So, the Empire was divided between the Latin speaking “West” and the Greek speaking “East”. The main City of the West was Rome while the main City of the East was Constantinople. And the Church followed that Separation.

And primarily because of the Language Barrier (Latin versus Greek)- but also because of Custom and Tradition- the two Sides of the Empire gradually drifted further and further apart. And the Church followed that as well.

In the West, the “Bishop of Rome” gradually took on more and more Responsibilities and was gradually afforded more and more Importance and Reputation. In the East- the “Patriarchs” gradually grew to become more and more

Prominent and their Importance and Reputation grew along with that.

As Time went on- the Bishops of Rome began to assert that they alone were the “one and only” earthly Leader of the Christian Church (Pope). And the Patriarchs of Constantinople grew more and more disillusioned with that. So, there was friction between the two Sides of the Church.

At some Point- the Bishop of Rome as well as the Patriarchs of the East- not only managed the Church but they also managed the secular Affairs of the civil Government as well. And so, disputes about civil Laws and the day-to-day Operation of the Empire and NOT merely the Church was absorbed by the Leaders of both Sides. And all that did was to bring the two Sides into more and more Conflict- usually about Issues that had NOTHING to do with Jesus Christ and His Church.

In 325AD the Church gathered in the City of Nicaea to address a serious Heresy called, “*Arianism*” that taught that Jesus was a *created* Being and NOT God. And at the End of that Council- a “*Summary Statement*” was drawn up that defined what biblical “*Orthodoxy*” was. So, this was an Effort to arrive at “*Essential Truth*”- those Doctrines that a person MUST believe if he is to be saved.

And in the Part of the Original Creed pertaining to the Holy Spirit, the Creed said,

**And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord and Giver of Life;
Who Proceeds from the Father;
Who with the Father and the Son together
Is Worshipped and Glorified;
Who Spoke by the Prophets.**

The Bishop of Rome said that God the Holy Spirit proceeded from BOTH the Father AND the Son and NOT merely from the Father. And to prove that- he used what Jesus said in **John 14:26**

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name...

... along with what the Lord said in **John 15:26&27:**

**26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,
27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.**

... to justify him *unilaterally* changing that portion of the Creed to say,

Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son;

... where the phrase, “*and the Son*” in the Latin is “*Filioque*”.

The eastern Patriarchs went ballistic over that Change and protested to the Bishop of Rome. And since Tensions were already very High between East and

West- the Bishop of Rome basically told the Patriarchs that as the direct Link with Peter- he had the Authority to change the Creed. The Patriarchs *continued* to protest that he did NOT have that kind of Power.

Finally, the Impasse was settled in 1054AD by the Christian Church splitting in half- East and West. And that “Split” called, the “*Great Schism*” has lasted to this Day. The Leaders of the eastern Church renamed their Church, the “*Orthodox Church*”- teaching that they and they ALONE are the “true” Church; while the Church in the West became more and more “Catholic” and asserted the same.

Now this Issue alone would have never caused such a Schism had the two sides not already been heading in different Directions for many decades. But the foundational Issue has to do with how East and West understand the Trinity. For example, a Century and a half earlier, the great Augustine had written in his book *On the Trinity*. And in that book- he said,

“Neither can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed also from the Son, for the same Spirit is not without reason said to be the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son . . . the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son.”⁷

In view of such a clear Teaching from a “Pillar” of the western Church, it was easy to assume that the Filioque was simply clarifying the correct Meaning of the Nicene Creed along agreed-upon Augustinian lines.

So, while Spanish Christians met in the City of Toledo, and Charlemagne ruled the West- the Papacy finally put its pen to the Nicene Creed. And the formality of this Event revealed that the East was on a completely different Trajectory entirely. Neither the Word nor the Concept of the *Filioque* was taught in the East. And that was because the East did NOT follow in the Steps of Augustine in their Trinitarian Thought. So, when the *Filioque* finally found its way to the East- the various Churches *refused* to embrace it.

And their Objections were two- fold:

1. Ecclesiastical
2. Theological

The Leaders of the eastern Churches taught that,

“such a change . . . should require an ecumenical council akin to Nicaea, Constantinople and Chalcedon”⁸

... in other words, an *ecumenical* Creed must only be altered *ecumenically* – with the whole Church represented.

The second and more important Objection was Theological. Despite the East’s wholehearted Sympathy with the West’s Battle against the Arians, they were not willing to place the Son alongside the Father in the Spirit’s Procession. In fact, three hundred years after Augustine argued for a “double procession” of the Spirit, the East’s John of Damascus taught just the opposite:

⁷ Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, p.143

⁸ *Through Western Eyes*, p.225

“We speak also of the Spirit of the Son, not as though proceeding from him, but as proceeding through him from the Father. For the Father alone is cause”⁹

The East held to such a Position, in part, because its Trinitarian theology differed from the West’s. The British Theologian, Gerald Bray said, according to Augustine and the West,

“... the Holy Spirit is the mutual love of the Father and the Son,” and therefore “he stands in the same relationship to both”¹⁰

According to the East, however,

“Since the Son and the Father are not the same, their respective relations to the Holy Spirit cannot be the same either. Therefore, to talk of the Spirit proceeding from the Father *and* the Son without differentiation is to confuse the two”¹¹

When the Council of Ferrara-Florence was held in the mid-fifteenth Century, the Disagreements over the *Filioque* caused the Rift to widen into a Gulf. In the aftermath of the Council, the East’s “hesychast Theologian”, Mark Eugenikos (1392- 1444) wrote of *Filioque* sympathizers,

“Avoid them and their fellowship. They are ‘false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ’ [2Corinthians 11:13].¹²

... and to that Bray wrote,

“In such a climate the *Filioque* stood no chance, and since then the rejection of it has been a hallmark of allegiance to Eastern Orthodoxy, a badge of belonging that cannot be surrendered without incurring the charge of apostasy from the true faith.”¹³

Even now- in the 21st Century- *before* Catholics can convert to Orthodoxy, they *must* renounce, among other Teachings, the Doctrine of the *Filioque*¹⁴

But the biblical Evidence favors the western View. And so, during the Protestant Reformation 500 years after the Great Schism- the “Protestors” agreed that the Western Understanding of the Trinity was what the Scriptures actually taught. And so, the Protestants didn’t throw out the Doctrine of the Trinity- even though they did throw out many Teachings from Rome.

So, what is important to remember is that both God the Father as well as Jesus, the Son sent God the Holy Spirit to those whom God has called to Salvation. And as He dwells continually in us- we are constantly empowered; encouraged; and brought under Conviction.

⁹ Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, p.143.

¹⁰ *God Has Spoken*, p. 649.

¹¹ *Through Western Eyes*, p. 230

¹² *God Has Spoken*, p. 707

¹³ *Ibid* p. 707

¹⁴ *Through Western Eyes*, p. 249

And it is that ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit in our Lives as to why we remain saved and *continue* to seek to obey God's Commandments with Joy.

So, when God "turns them over" (abandons) a people- the opposite is true. There is NO Encouragement; NO Empowerment; and NO Conviction.

The *Third* Exchange and Abandonment- Romans 1:28-32

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,
30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

**31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;
32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

Now that the Judgment of Abandonment is doing its Work- there is a final type of Judgment that comes on the people. **Romans 1:28** says,

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

The Hostility against God that is burning in the people- who have already made the first two Exchanges and who have been abandoned by God- is shown here:

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer...