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# Who is Satan? What is Hell? What is Evil?

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Who is Satan? Satan is real and personal and dedicated to evil! The first thing that comes to people's minds today is a reddish man in a red suit with long horns, goat legs, a pointed tail, and a big pitchfork. For others who don't actually believe in his existence, "Satan" is simply a way to relate to the presence of evil in the world. Yet, the Bible reveals that Satan is real, personal; and a being who is a powerful destroyer; who is an active agent in our world (Luke 4:1-13). Satan is the leader of the fallen Angels (Demons). His main name means our chief adversary (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 12f; Zech 3:1-2). Satan is so powerful that even Michael the archangel did not oppose him directly; Michael attacked him in the name of the Lord (Jude 8-9)! Satan can whip us good like a bully in the playground; we are no match for him. However our dad can beat him up (Christ)! See the names and descriptions in the preceding pages, which equals his strategies. Satan was defeated, thus he is jealous of God, and is opposed to all that represents the character of the true Creator.

Satan is the father of lies and the greatest liar of all! He is called the deceiver, and the manipulator. To accomplish his purposes, Satan blinds people to their need to be in Christ; and causes us Christians to fight amongst ourselves so the Word does not get out, or gets out wrong!

Two forces are at work in the world, the forces of Christ and the forces of evil. Not the force of "Star Wars" of equal balance, such as Chinese Philosophy of "Ying and Yang". God is Sovereign; Satan is a condemned created entity! Satan cannot exert his power beyond what God allows him to for His purpose! Remember Satan may be the "god" of this age and ruler of the earth, but God is God and is still King and in charge! You are asked to choose between them. This choice should not be difficult: To side with defeat and destruction or with the one who creates and loves us, and who is the victor!

God is a God of truth and purity, Satan is the opposite! Satan is not a god, nor is he pure or is concerned with truth!

## **Where did Satan come from?**

God created Satan as the head of the Angels. He was at one time the most powerful, intelligent and beautiful angel in heaven. Known as Lucifer (Angel of Light), he was second only to God Himself (Ezekiel 28:12-15). But, because of

the desire to be like God, Lucifer rebelled against God and was kicked out of heaven along with one-third of all the angels (I Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:4). Thus, Satan and the demons are actually fallen angels. The Bible also mentions other "Principalities and Powers", (Rom. 8:38-39) which we do not know much about. They can be a different class of demons or even other created "entities" that the Bible does not expand on.

### **What does Satan do?**

The Bible calls Satan "the god of this age" who blinds and deceives the minds of unbelievers to keep them from understanding and accepting the truth about Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4). He has seemingly been very successful over the millennia; however God is still sovereign!

Satan cannot create matter, he can only manipulate it. Just like a box of "Legos"; though we can make something, we did not manufacture the Legos! Satan is not omnipresent or omnipotent, that is, he is not all knowing, all present, and all powerful, only God is! Because of all of Satan's entourage (demons), it may seem like he is.

Satan is a powerful enemy of believers (Ephesians 6:11-18). Most people think Satan is only interested in causing disasters and drunk drivers. But his favorite weapon (that he likes to use most) is to cause Christians to bicker and disagree and sow discord. Thus, when Christians are fighting, they are not evangelizing or accomplishing the building of the kingdom!

He will not tell us that he wants to destroy us and manipulate us, nor does he give us his plans. He gives us what we want, so it fulfills what Satan wants. He deceives us by subjective truth and human reasoning that sounds appealing, but is a trap! Our human reasoning is very limited and cannot see the big picture that God sees, that is why we must trust and obey, because there is no other way! We must take him seriously, knowing that a very real spiritual war is being fought all around us. Yet, as Christians, we do not need to fear Satan. We do not need to be looking for him under every bush of problems. Let us not forget our own Fallen Nature!

### **What is Satan's position?**

He has been defeated from the beginning, (Gen 3:14-15). He has been judged (Jn 16:8-11). He was defeated by Christ at the Cross of Calvary, this was Satan's final judgment (Jn 12:31; I Jn 3:8; Col. 2:15; James 4:7) His future is to be cast into the lake of Fire (Matt 25:41; Rev. 20:10) (Colossians 2:15). Even though he is now on the prowl, Satan's future is defeat! His future and final doom have been declared by God. As a cornered animal he will fight us with all the ability and tenacity he can muster! However, Satan has been defeated and He who is in us (Christ) is greater than he who is in the world (Satan) (I Jn 4:4)!

## What can Satan do to me?

He can only do to you what God will allow for His glory. God will not allow anything to happen to you that you cannot handle and grow from to be better used to further Christ's Kingdom and Glory! (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31, 32). In other words, Satan cannot do squat, unless it is authorized for our benefit (Rom. 8:28)! However we are to take Satan's malice and cunning seriously. We are to know his names and strategies so we can combat his attacks. We are not to fear him in terror like in some Hollywood movie, because he has been defeated (Matt 12:29)!

## What is your response?

Satan is real and he is powerful. Unfortunately, most Christians go to one of two extremes: They either ignore his role in the world, or they blame him for everything from marital problems to bad luck, not taking personal responsibility. As a Christian you need to recognize Satan for who he is, as revealed in Scripture, and not from any other source. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" is not a good source of information, nor are a lot of TV preachers. Satan is a created creature and not divine, he has great knowledge and power, but is not all knowing and all powerful. Satan is our enemy, but we have access to a greater power. You must stand strong against him and not cringe with terror, **"because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world"** (1 John 4:4). Thus we are to acknowledge his reality and the presence of his demons, knowing his strategies to manipulate so we do not fall prey, and be in prayer so our fellow Christians do not fall in deceit either.

## Think It Through:

We don't want to become preoccupied with Satan, or live in fear of what Scripture reveals, or what we see in the media or by false teachers. We can know about him so we can be better prepared and equipped to stand against him by what Christ has done.

If you've been dipping into anything having to do with the occult; séances, tarot cards, crystals, astrology, Quija board, palm reading, stop now! This is strictly forbidden in the Bible for good reason, to protect you. (See Deuteronomy 18:10-13.)

But Satan does not limit himself to just the occult. Some of his favorite domains for dealing his deadly deceptions are politics, education, and the media. He uses good things to bring us down too. Anything that gets in the way of Christ and your growth in Him, can be from Satan, including sports, education, friends, TV, movies, cars, ETC. Too much of a good thing can be very bad! Pay careful attention to what you hear in public school and from the news and the

entertainment industry. Refuse all beliefs and practices that give the devil a foothold in your life.

**Christians can stand against Satan by.** . Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; & James 4:7

God wants you to overcome Satan; you do not have to believe in Satan's deceptions and lies. You cannot only resist Satan; but overcome him! Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death." Jesus has already overcome Satan by Calvary's conquest, and that victory has been imparted unto us! If you have confessed your sins under the shed blood of Jesus Christ, you will be cleansed and no longer under the control of Satan.

You can overcome Satan by the Word, quoting and meditating on scripture. You can cast him off by claiming Christ as Lord. This means by verbally praying in the Name of Christ, and in His authority, and tell Satan to go away and not come back! Tell Satan that you trust in the Lord, that you know he is lying, and that you no longer have to listen to him because you belong to God. Finally, you can overcome Satan by completely committing your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, you give Him total control of your life, total control over your will!

The saints in Revelation gave up their lives to serve Jesus because they knew Christ had conquered sin and Satan. There is no turning back in the Christian life. Either we live completely for Christ by surrendering our will to Him, or we fall into the traps Satan has planned in order to defeat us. Because we have kept some of our desires, Satan moved in on them! Believe in Christ and His Word, and you will continue to grow in His character, in Christlikeness.

**The Names of SATAN** "Who is he and what does he do?"

**How well do you know the Enemy?**

Satan is not just a product of TV shows such as "Charmed", "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" or "Angel", or from the minds of some Hollywood special effects wizards, such as the movie "Legend". He's a dangerous killer. By knowing the names, roles and strategies of Satan, we can prepare ourselves from his attacks! Not much is written about Satan in most Christian bookstores or on the Internet, unless it is false teaching. It amazes me how much I saw written on "spiritual warfare" which was biblically incorrect.

The tactics of Satan are similar to that of a pool shark. The pool shark, in order to be successful, has to be able to be very skilled in shooting pool as well as pretending that he is not such a good player. The pool shark will deliberately miss a few shots and even lose a game or two when the stakes are not so high.

As the stakes get higher, the pool shark will deliberately miss a few shots, but not the ones that really count. He keeps his opponent thinking that he will surely win the next game, and this goes on until the victim has lost it all. Satan operates much in the same way. He has defeated many by causing them to think that they were really winning.

Many do not believe that Satan exists; they think he is just the figment of an over worked bygone imagination. Such thinking greatly pleases Satan. The more covert he can be, the more successful he is. He has the best advantage over those who refuse to believe what the Bible teaches concerning his existence and influence in the world. Those who laugh at the existence of Satan or a "real devil", accuse those who know of his existence as being unrealistic. But we need to ask the question, "Who is being unrealistic?" How else can we explain the immoral darkness which our culture has plunged itself into? How else can we explain the number of wars in the last century alone, and the hundreds of millions of people who have been killed, such as the Jews in WWII, the World Trade Center, and all the other horrible atrocities? How else can we explain the bankrupted morality and lawlessness which runs rampant in our own country and it's leadership? How can we explain a society that tolerates the murder of its unborn children?

The ones who are obviously unrealistic are those who explain all of these things as being due to the lack of education, programs, and of a new world order? They think with just a little more progress, more education, and more money spent, and then things will get better. Instead of getting better, they are getting worse. The U.S. leads the world in "progress" and also leads the world in pornography, addictions, prisoners, and divorce. So who is being unrealistic? Are you being realistic about the existence and influence of Satan in your own life? Just like the pool shark, Satan will let you win once in awhile. But you will not win the game!

You may resist temptation for awhile and think you are winning. What you do not realize is that you are playing right into Satan's hands. Remember, in the end, the winner takes all. Satan is real, demons are real. Read through the descriptions and roles of Satan in the Word of God, and come to grips with reality! There is only One who has successfully defeated Satan and that is Christ. Without Christ you are no match for the enemy of your soul. With out Christ you will not win the game of life!

**Remember This First:**

- He is an angel who was kicked out of heaven because of his insurrection against God's authority (Isaiah 14:12-14).
- He wants to destroy you. "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

- He has been already defeated in the person and work of Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 2:14-15).

### **So What???**

Whatever you call him: the Devil, Mephistopheles, Beelzebub, Lucifer, or the big red dude; Satan is alive and well. His desire is to destroy you! The worship of Satan, witchcraft on movies and TV, and occult practices with young people are on the rise. In fact, there are even "Churches of Satan" that worship him as we worship God!! He is real! The question is, "For there is a Devil, for there is no doubt; is he trying to get in you or trying to get out? (Ancient Greek Proverb)

**Biblical Names of Satan =his Schemes and Plans: By knowing his names, we know how he behaves!**

Apollyon & Abaddon: (Rev. 9:11) These Greek and Hebrew terms means he is the destroyer.

LUCIFER: (Isaiah 14:12). This term means the morning star. It literally means a "light-bearer", the shining one, a picture of Satan's original position in heaven, with the angels. He is able to still masquerade as a beautiful being to snare Christians!

SATAN: (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1:2f; Job 16; Zech 3:1-2; Matt. 4:10). This term means "adversary"; he is the chief adversary both to God and to humans.

DEVIL: (Matt 13:39; Eph. 6:11). This term occurs in the New Testament only, it comes from the Greek language meaning to accuse and slander. He accuses and slanders (Rev. 12:10).

DRAGON: (Isa. 51:9, Rev. 12:3,7; 13:2). The term dragon means literally "Serpent" or "Sea Monster", dragon is a terrifying and destructive beast who seeks total devastation of God's people. This image is not meant to terrify us.

SERPENT: (Gen. 3:1; Isa. 27:1; Rev. 12:9; 20:2). This term refers to his "crookedness", "craftiness", and "deceitfulness." This name reveals the first reference to Satan in the Bible, as he stalked and deceived Eve. His intention is malice, fury, cruelty, all directed toward God's truth, and God's people.

BEELZEBUB or BEELZEBUL: (Matt 10:25; 12:24,27; Mark 3:22). The exact meaning of this term is not known. It is suggested that it means "lord of the house", and may refer to Satan's authority over the demons.

BELIAL or BELIAR: (2 Cor. 6:15). This term was used in the Old Testament in the context of “worthlessness.”

THE WICKED ONE OR THE EVIL ONE: (Matt. 13:19,38; Eph. 6:16). A description of his character and work.

THE TEMPTER: (Matt 4:3; I Thess. 3:5). This name indicates that his constant purpose is to cause people to sin. This term seems to indicate that he presents the most plausible excuses and suggests the most striking advantage for sinning.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD: (2 Cor. 4:4). He sponsors false religion and all the false cults and systems, which are against Christianity; he presides over our ant-God life style.

THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR: (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). As such he is the leader of the evil angels and prince over this vast host (army) of subordinates (demons), which carry, out his orders. He rules with tyrannical power.

Prince that shall come (Daniel 9:26) This is a picture of a military commander of a occupying the front doing horrible atrocities. Also see II Thessalonians 2:3-4 and Revelation 12:7-9.

Son of perdition (John 17:12; II Thessalonians 2:3) Satan can and will cause ruin or loss in physical, spiritual or eternal. He will destroy you fully if you let him and refuse Christ’s love and mediation.

Strong man (Mt 12:29) Satan is powerless to prevent the Kingdom of God, because he has been bound. We do not have the power to do it as some teach, only Christ does and did!

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD: (Dan. 10:12-11:1; John 12:31; 14:30 16:11). This seems to refer to his influence over the governments and political arenas of this world, that he is the one who is the ruler, and guards his position.

ANGEL OF LIGHT: (2 Cor. 11:12-14). This phrase best describes Satan=s masterful ability of imitation and his counterfeit proposals given to individuals. He is cunning as a wolf in sheep's clothing, disguising evil in a good looking package.

Little horn (Daniel 7:8) A horn (as an extrapolative); by implication, a flask, cornet; by resembling an elephant's tooth (ivory), a corner of the altar, or a mountain peak, or a ray of light; this is just symbolic power.

ROARING LION: (1 Peter 5:8). This “word picture” emphasizes Satan’s continual persecution and his role as a persecutor of believers.

FATHER OF LIES: (John 8:44). Satan’s opposition to God includes a vast host of fallen angels and his counterfeit proposals, which do not derive their source from the Lord, and describes Satan as the source (father) of all that is untrue (lies). (1 John 3:8.)

King of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4) This name means confusion; ‘Babel’ i.e. “he keeps babbling about...” (i.e. Babylon = nonsense), this also refers to Babylonia and the Babylonian empire.

King of Tyrus (Ezekiel 28:12) refers to a rock; ‘Tsor’, is a place in Palestine. Satan is the false rock. Christ is the One true Rock!

Wicked One: (1 John 5:18) This description is self evident!

Mephistopheles: Is not a biblical name, it is found in German folklore. The most notorious of the spirits of evil, it is identified with the exploits of "Dr. Faust Goethe", who defines Mephistopheles as, "part of the power that still works for good while ever scheming ill." "Mephistopheles in Goethe’s Tale called “Faust”: I am the spirit that denies! And justly so; for all things from the void called forth, deserve to be destroyed; “Twere better, then, were naught created. Thus, all which you as sin have rated, Destruction, caught with evil bent, That is my proper element.”

## ***Satan’s Descriptions=Satan’s Strategies!***

Liar: He is the father, inspirer, and creator of lies. His goal is to steal God's glory and plan through God's people, (John 8:44) and stimulates us to lie! (Acts 5:3)

Enemy: He is totally dedicated to the opposition of the children of God with destructive ferocity. (I Peter 5:8.)

Counterfeiter: He is able to present an innocent “front.” 2 Corinthians (11:14,15.)

Misleader: He uses evil spirits to mislead Christians in Bible truth and doctrine. (I Timothy 4:1.)

Deceiver: He seeks by all possible means to create false impressions, innuendoes, and misunderstandings, to cause us to fight amongst each other. (Revelation 12:9; II Thessalonians 2:9,10.)



Promoter of pride: He stimulates humanity's high appraisal of themselves (Genesis 3:5; I Timothy 3:6.)

Outwiter: (Luke 22:32; 2 Cor. 2:11;11:3-15; Eph. 6:16) He probes us for weakness, then misleads, misdirects and undermines our strengths and hopes and faith and love into the wrong direction, away from God's will.

Blinder of people's minds: His purpose is to keep individuals in darkness (ignorance) of the light of the Gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:4.)

Ruler of darkness: His kingdom is totally without the light of truth, peace and love. (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Colossians 1:13; I John 2:9-II.)

Director of demonic activity: He controls an army of evil spirits, not limited to "demons". Remember he controls only a; God has 2/3rds!!! (Matthew 12:24; Ephesians 6:12.)

Suppressor of the Word of God: He constantly seeks to block the proclamation, acceptance, and use of the Scriptures. (Matthew 13:38,39.)

Hinderer: He seeks to put things in the way of the Christian seeking to do God's will. (I Thessalonians 2:18.) He also is opposed to our prayers and fights against them. (Dan. 10:12-11:1)

Oppressor: He uses depression and discouragement as weapons to undermine the Christian's sense of purpose. (Acts 10:38; 1 Kings 19.)

Troubler: He seeks to invade the physical realm and to limit the strength of God's children. (2 Corinthians 12:7.)

Accuser and slanderer: His name, Devil, or "diabolos" (Greek), means a person who throws things at people. (Revelation 12:10.)

Creator of division: He is out to cause dissension and disagreement between Christians. (2 Corinthians 2:10,11; James 3:13-16.)

Trickster: He uses subtle ways and means of confusing the Lord's people. (Ephesians 6:11.)

Tempter: His plan is to persuade us to take an alternate course to God's way. (Matthew 4:1 - 11; Luke 4:1-13; I Thessalonians 3:5.)

Ensnarer: He is out to trap the Christian to commit sin, thus ruining and spoiling his testimony. (I Timothy 3:7.)

Stimulator of lust: He distorts normal desires, by taking God's design and inflames it; uncontrolled sensuality (emotions) is a tool of Satan. (Ephesians 2:2,3.)

Counterfeiter: He is capable of presenting an innocent "front." (2 Corinthians 11:14,15.)

Murderer: He is the destroyer and devourer: He is intent upon the callous and calculated destruction of God's children. (I Peter 5:8; John 8:44; Revelation 9:11.)

Angel of bottomless pit: (Rev 9:11) Same context as murder.

God and prince of this world: He stirs up the three cravings described in I John 2:16; (foolish pride, selfish desires, & worldly desires) and focuses Christians on the worldly desires. (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:15; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12.)

HOSTILE OPPONENT: He is the grand adversary to everything good, and is dedicated to the opposition of God's plans. (Zech. 3:1; I Thess. 2:17-18)

## **Demons**

### **Who are the demons and what can they do to me?**

Mark 1:21-28; Luke 10:17-20; 11:14-26; 1 Corinthians 10:14-24; 1 John 4:1-6

### **How well do you know the Enemy?**

Have you ever had a really rough day? Perhaps you have had a rough time in this life you have been given, as you stress and toil through your days, taking hit after hit from gossipers, prideful hypocrites, and others whose intentions were suspect—perhaps even malice laden. And, all the while, you remain steadfast in your walk with Christ, striving to model His character and love. Have you given your all to your family, friends, work, or church, just to see others put you down, ignoring you at best and attacking you at worst? Have you ever considered that when we walk closely in truth and integrity, we are like a deer in hunting season, chained to a tree with a bull's-eye painted on us, so those who are ungodly can come against us? Maybe what we are going through is Spiritual Warfare, and the working of demons. Remember, the Enemy will come against us in power and force, and in ways we may not be aware of.

So, what do we do? Do we cave in to the ways of the world? Do we give up? Do we compromise? Do we become fearful? No way! Why, like in any battle, we dig in and fight back with even more powerful artillery—by displaying more love, more integrity, and more Christ-like character, so that His ways infuse all we do, regardless of what others try to do to us. Yes, this is hard, and comprises the daily life of most godly pastors and Christians whom I know world wide; yet, we have to keep the fight clean and declare everything to His glory. We need to know Satan and demons, as well as our fellow humans, who are prideful and arrogant. The hypocrites and those who do not know better will hate us because we love Him, because He first loved us. So, do not be dismayed; you are in Christ's hands. He loves and cares for you, and will carry you through! So, let us find out, from God's most precious Word, what He has to say about this subject.

Most people see spiritual warfare as demons directly attacking Believers physically and mentally, just as you might see in movies such as, *The Exorcist*. Although this is very entertaining in movies, movies are not to be our source of theology or understanding of how either demons or God works. Nevertheless, a lot of people are teaching what they think and experience, which is usually not accurate according to the Scriptures. Yes, demons can move against us in extreme and physically confronting ways, as we sometimes see in the movies and in the mouths of some preachers; however, more often, they attack us in much more subtle ways which are far more effective and destructive than you may think! And, far more effective than any physical confrontation! It is my goal in this article to give you clear, Biblical precepts of who the demons are, what they do, and how we can stand against them.

### **Who are the Demons?**

Demons are supernatural beings that were created many eons ago, before the Fall (Isaiah 14:12-14; Daniel 10:13; Ezekiel 28:12-15—the OT passages are figurative; John 12:31; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The word for *demons* (*daimon/daimonia*) is from the Greek; it is a broad term, meaning, *spiritual beings*, or sometimes referred as, *small gods* (Acts 17:18). Elsewhere in the NT, the word for demons refers to evil spirits (Mathews 8:16; 17:18; Luke 10:17, 20; Mark 9:25). They are actually fallen angels who used to hang out with God, to do His will and worship Him in a perfect utopia paradise (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6)! But, under the command and influence of Satan, they were persuaded to go his way in rebellion against God (Matthew 9:34; 12:24-29; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). They lost, and fell from their state of grace, thus becoming demons. They are basically angels who turned evil, and became totally depraved (extreme malevolence), in contrast to the angels who are still in a state of harmony with God and grace, and, who act in goodness and are still sinless, because they did not fall with Satan.

Demons are the “ministers” and representatives of Satan, since Satan is not “omnipresent,” that is, he cannot be everywhere at once, or in multiple places at once; he can be at only one place at a time (Luke 4:35; 9:1,42; John 10:21). There are two classes of demons under Satan’s command, those who are free to roam the earth and harass people (Ephesians 2:2; 6:11-12; Colossians 1:13), and, those who are imprisoned in the temporary prison of the *abyss* (Luke 8:31; Revelations 9:1-11; 20:1-3). They will be judged at the “Day of Judgment” (Matthew 8:29, 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). They will be punished (Matthew 8:29; 25:41; Luke 8:28; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12:7-9). They know they are doomed to destruction (Matthew 8:29). Their final fate will be the *lake of fire* (Matthew 25:41), the eternal dwelling of Satan, demons, and all unsaved people.

Why did a third of the angels rebel against a utopia of peace and love? They sought pride, and did not like being subject to God. They wanted to do their own thing, even if it meant total alienation and destruction. Thus, they joined with Satan, and chose insurrection to fight God. That is how they became corrupt and hostile to God and humanity. Like we humans, they had free will and exercised it. This is very similar to our personal rebellions, as we, too, do not take into account the future, or God’s perfect plan and His precepts, or think things through; we just want the fun now, and to do our own thing—regardless of the consequences!

Demons are spiritual in their nature as in “non-corporeal” beings. This means they do not have a physical body, but, they can create the illusion that they do (Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; Revelations 16:14). This means they have no physical form, just like Angels. Since they are purely *spiritual*, they do not have to function in our corporeal (material reality) realm. We do not have access to where they live and function, nor can we see it. However, we do experience its effects. Demons are semi-immortal beings who are thousands of years old, but, they will not live forever as we will, in eternity. There will come a time, in the final judgment, when the demons will be annihilated—destroyed (Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:10). Their character is to be dishonest, crooked, and manipulative, so, their goal is to be antagonistic to all that is good and holy. They have no regard for truth or righteousness, and, they passionately hate us humans. Why do they hate us? Because, we have redemption at our call, which they rejected, and, now it is too late for them. They know firsthand about redemption and Christ (Mark 1:24), but reject it. We do not have firsthand knowledge, but, by faith, we receive it. Their desire is to turn us away from righteousness and truth, and into their camp of corruption.

They are adversaries of all of humanity; however, they are careful on whom they concentrate, and, with whom they pick their fights (Matthew 12:45). They are sent by Satan to cause trouble between peoples, destroying relationships, and causing us to fall away from God (Judges 9:23). Since they know they are in the wrong, they will do all they can to stand against all that is godly. They spend all of their energies seeking to destroy humanity, and God’s

reputation. Their goal is to get as many of us as they can in some twisted mindset to prove that God was wrong, and to take as many with them as possible.

### **How do Demons Operate?**

How do people invite demon activates in their lives? There are several ways to get their attention. Being a faithful Christian will do it. But, remember, “He who is in you (Jesus) is greater they he (Satan) who is in the world!” (1 John 4:4-6) Therefore, when we are in Christ, our steady growth and prayer will be the weapons the Spirit will use to protect us. Consequently, we do not need to hunt and seek demons. Lest you become a target, just spend more time in prayer, and get others to pray for you. In my pastoral experience, demons hate prayer, and so, will leave you alone to find a more “pleasant” target.

Some of the ways in which demons work which are popular in our thinking, on the contrary, are really rare strategies. These less popular strategies include coming into a non-Christian by idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:19-21), through drugs and substance abuse (Revelations 9:21; 18:23), through the practice and influence of witchcraft (Psalm 96:5; 136: 37-39; Isaiah 8:19; Galatians 5:20—the word we use for pharmacy comes from *farmakeia* in the Greek, and is also used for *sorcery*, which is witchcraft), and when Christians backslide, or never take seriously their faith, like the “Kingdom Parables” (Matthew 13). Demons can also reside in the reprobate soul—those who are alienated from Christ due to their willful pride (Romans 1:23).

How can you discern if these are ways you or someone you know is being attacked? One is a willful disregard to Truth, and a rejection of Christ. There are also psychological signs such as loneliness, boredom, bitterness, arrogance, self pity, a “blame” mentality, revenge oriented thinking, disillusionment, discouragement, and frustration—all centered upon pride. There is also a tendency to be very rebellious, and to seek pleasure and fulfillment in lust and things that are ungodly. Sometimes, it is a passion to teach false doctrine and lead others astray. But, you have to be in prayer and discerning, as these symptoms can also be from chemical imbalances in the brain, having rough times, being unable to deal with life’s issues, or being so self centered, one cannot, or will not, see Christ as their Lord (Ephesians 4: 17-32).

Demons also have the power to cause death where God permits (Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8). Remember, Satan killed Job's children, (Job 1:12, 18-19), and provoked Cain to murder Abel (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12). Satan and demons can also cause disease (Job 2:6-8; Matthew 12:22; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38) and mental illness (Matthew 8:28; 8:27; 11:22; 17:15; Mark 1:26; 9:17; Luke 4:35; 11:14; Acts 19:11,12). They can even mimic some of Jesus’ powers, such as healings, to gather attention to themselves (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 16:14). They can affect people, including

Christians, morally and mentally (Luke 8:27; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Revelation 9:20-21; 16:13), and effect non-Christians physically, with maladies such as blindness (Matthew 12:22), insanity (Luke 8:26-36), stupidity (Matthew 9:32-33), and suicidal tendencies (Mark 9:22).

However, as Christians, we can be harassed, but not possessed (1 John 4:4). That means even though Satan and his entourage can affect us, influence us, inspire us, frustrate us, bother us, and cause havoc and destruction, he cannot force us to comply. We have to be willful combatants in his army. We have to choose to ignore Truth, and focus on falsehoods.

The ways that demons like to operate with the most are to corrupt us with false doctrine (1 Kings 22:21-231; Timothy 4:1-5), and obscure the truth of who Christ is (James 2:19; 1 John 4:1-3). They can get us to concentrate on the wrong things in life and inspire us to teach others false things, replicating their strategy in people who are willing. In addition, they can persecute you and your families, take away your money and property, and turn your friends and family against you, which are some of their other favorite ways to work. Satan, with his demons, is the "ruler of this world" (Ephesians 2:2), but, we can take comfort, because we are under the sovereignty of God. Demons cannot do anything to us without God's permission, just as it was with Job.

We have to realize that we do not need Satan or the demons; we have enough sin within ourselves to permanently send ourselves to hell, and cause destruction and chaos to all of our relationships. But, demons can bring destruction. We need to understand them so we can be in prayer and be on guard (Isaiah 29:4; 47; Jeremiah 27:6-10; 1 Timothy 1:19-20).

What can Satan do to me? He can only do to you what God will allow for His glory. God will not allow anything to happen to you that you cannot handle and grow from, to be better used to further Christ's Kingdom and Glory (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31, 32). In other words, Satan cannot do "squat," unless it is authorized for our benefit (Romans 8:28)! We are not to fear him in terror like some Hollywood movie, because, he has been defeated and knows it (Matthew 12:29)!

Demons share the same mindset of the reprobate human, who knows in his heart he is wrong, but he does not care; thus, he does all he can to corrupt others (Romans 1:18-31). Thus, demons, as well as pious fraud Christians, "have it out" for the Kingdom of Christ, and Christians who are truly obedient, and trust the Lord. So, they throw all of their "stuff" at the righteous, and those who model and teach the precepts of Christ. However, demons love the so-called "nominal" Christians, who just go to church, pew-sit, and have no real faith or obedience to God. This is the Christian who may go to church to make a good show, to spout off his agendas and aspirations, but has no real faith or trust in God. These show no obedience, character, sanctification, or a heart after God. They are the ones

who demons leave alone, allowing their own pride and presumptions to ruin them. They do this because they know that the prideful, the reprobate, even the nominal Christians are already residing in their camp of opposition to God, so why waste their time and resources! Now you know *why good things happen to bad people*. But, remember, it is very temporary, and in the end, they lose out big time!

Satan is the demon's chief ruler and lord (Matt 12: 24-29). Satan is also extremely intelligent and knowledgeable—far beyond any human—and his role is more of a manager to his demon followers. Thus, he can organize demons for specific roles and attacks (Ephesians 6:10-12). Their power and abilities will seem formidable to us, but, as Calvin said, "Their movement is limited by the chains they drag wherever they go." They are not all powerful; they have limitations set by our God. There is not Ying and Yang, no *half of all power is good and the other half is evil* in a balanced symmetry. This is one of Satan's lies. The chains are of judgment and their future destruction, and they can never overcome the will of God! This should give us great comfort and relief.

Since Demons are so old, and were once Angels, they also possess supernatural knowledge, and some power that we do not have access to. They still have access to incredible knowledge, and thus come across to us as powerful beings, when, in fact, in Christ we have more power (Mark 1:24; 9:17-27). They can also make their victims exhibit superhuman physical strength (Luke 8:29). They are invisible and are not limited to anything physical such as walls or people. However, they may assume, or appear in, human form (2 Kings 2:11; 6:17; Revelation 9:1-12; 16:13-16). They do not know the future; only God does. Because of their vast knowledge, they can make good educated guesses, and manipulate us into thinking they are more aware and powerful than they actually are. They normally operate by being shrewd. The demons in Matthew, chapter eight, begged Jesus not to vanquish them. In pagan literature, they liked to negotiate the least difficult terms to their favor, just as attorneys do today (I am not saying this as a "put down," but, as an example. Or, you may take it as a joke, since this is my wife's profession!).

Demons also know who Jesus is, and of our inheritance; thus, they are subject to the authority of Christ, and ours, too, when we cast them out in Christ's name only. The demons recognize Jesus for who He is in power and position, and, they are one of the greatest testimonies to the deity of Jesus (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 8:28; Acts 19:15). They have belief, but not faith (This is very important for us to understand. We too, can believe—that is, know all about Christ and Christianity in an academic sense, but do nothing with it by faith. We can even believe with passion; but, if we have no faith—that is, going beyond belief so it is trust and assurance, exhibited by obedience and love—it is a good sign that one is not saved!)! In Matthew 8:28-34, they responded to Jesus with hate, tempered with fear. They knew who He was, and they knew of their fate to come, in judgment and destruction.

Ironically, Jesus was falsely accused of being possessed by demons in Mark 3:22-30; John 7:20; 8:48; and 10:20. And, it is a good bet those who accused Jesus were, in fact, themselves possessed, or at least heavily influenced, by demons. In spite of all Jesus did to prove who He was, using miraculous, unfathomable healings, and words of incredible wisdom that baffled the most learned of men, they still asked for a sign. They continued to attack Him, accusing Him of being a demon—not just any demon, but the prince of them all! While Jesus continued to receive criticism from the pious, fraud Pharisees and Scribes who just did not get it, they still had the audacity to ask Him to prove it. They attacked Him, tried to falsely implicate Him of a crime, tried to trick Him, and accused Him of being a demon; yet, they still had the impertinence to ask The God of Eternity and their only Hope for Salvation to prove it. Thus, Jesus turned the tables on their unrighteous deeds, and placed a mirror in their face for them to see their own hypocrisy (Matthew 12: 22-37; 38-50)! Demons and evil people work on the same game field, attacking our playground.

One of the reasons why God gave the land of Palestine to the Hebrews was because of the extreme corruption there. The corrupt Canaanites and other evil people groups actually worshipped the demons (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; 32:17; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37; Matthew 4:9; Luke 4:7; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21; 1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 13:4). This worship of demons and anything that is not God is strictly forbidden, and will destroy us (Leviticus 17:7; Zechariah 13:2; Revelation 9:20).

### **Demons and Exorcism**

There are Instances of people being *exorcised* by Jesus (Matthew 4:24; 8:16; Mark 3:22; Luke 4:41), and by the disciples (Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7; 9:38; 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:12-16). This means the demons were cast, or ordered out of their willing or unwilling host. Sometimes, this is hard to do; it is like telling someone who loves their home to move to cheap apartment. They will do all they can in order to stay. The disciples sometimes were not able to drive out demons (Mark 9:18, 28-29). We cannot cast out demons by our own will or authority, because we have none. That is one of the reasons the disciples failed at it. We do not have the power or influence alone to do that. Only by what Christ has done, by His power working through us (Mark 1:25; 3:11-12; 9:25-29; Luke 9:1; 10:17) can we overcome the evil ones.

Demon possession is one of the topics that a lot of Christians get confused about. Possession can happen when a demon, or any hostile entity, enters and occupies the body and/or mind of an unbeliever (Romans 8:38-39; 1 Corinthians 10:19-22; Galatians 5:16-21). Instances of people being possessed or affected include Saul, (1 Samuel 16:14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10), two demon possessed men (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:2-20), the disabled (Matthew 9:32-33;



12:22; Luke 11:14), and Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2-3). There are more instances found in Matthew 9:17-27; 15:22-29; 17:14-18; Mark 1:23-26; 7:25-30; Luke 4:33-35; and 9:37-42.

Even though demons work by manipulating our sinful nature into taking the wrong road, so to speak, they can, and sometimes do possess people. But, remember, if you are saved by Grace, they cannot do this to you! Did you notice that in these passages, only non-Christians are affected? Demons cannot enter the bodies of Christians; those who have confessed Jesus as Lord have the Spirit living in them. This is because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is a very sad fact that some misguided Bible teachers are saying you can be possessed. In so doing, they can say an offense that they have caused was not their fault, as the devil made them do it. This refusal to own up to personal responsibility is blasphemy from the pit of Hell! This idea comes from the kingdom of the cults and movies—not from the Bible. There is no place in Scripture where a Believer is possessed, nor is there any teaching that could present a case for such an idea.

Exorcism is removing a demon(s) from a host by Christ's authority. Some Christians teach that we can do it by our power and authority, but Scripture teaches otherwise. Demons can cause all kinds of aggravation, discouragement, problems, and harassment, but they cannot dissuade Christ's purpose or our salvation. We can be “demonized,” that is, affected by them, but, we as Believers, elected in Christ, cannot be possessed (where they take over our will and or body). Since we have the Holy Spirit in us, there is no room in our inn! God works out their corruption and allows their presence for His purpose (Romans 8:28).

What is the difference between satanic attack and God's conviction? How do we discern whether the enemy is opposing us, or God is trying to convict? Satan attacks with the strategies mentioned in our article, the “Names of Satan.” God convicts us and “tempts” us so we will seek forgiveness or repentance. Satan gives no hope; God gives us a way out. God exposes our weakness for fixing; Satan manipulates our weakness for sin. If it is from God, we need to fix, forgive, and repent; if it is from Satan, we are to fight. Remember God's character and Satan's strategies; this will give us the distinction, direction, and purpose for our problems (Genesis 39:9). We must discern the difference between Satan's attacks and God's corrective love, or, we will fall to pride and deceit just as Satan himself did.

### **Be on Guard**

Spiritual warfare is alive, real, and certain (2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 6:10-18)! If you ignore it, the “dark one” will come. We must stand ready with a defense, lest he take up residence in us! Jesus won the victory over Satan; when

we are in Him, we have no need to fear. Satan needs your cooperation for him to come in you, and, a person who rejects Christ is his open invitation.

So, what do we do to guard ourselves from spiritual warfare? We do this by knowing our Lord. We know that He rescues us, just as He just went through a storm to cross a sea most would not dare to tread, to a place few would ever go, to meet two people who needed His help. One would reject Him and one would beg to go with Him. The community who rejected these two people also rejected Christ, and demanded His departure, as they valued pigs over people—money over eternity (Matthew 8: 28-34; John 14:6).

Jesus is the Strong Man who invaded Satan's house, and stole his power and his opportunities to do us in. We are given freedom and victory; we are given the power to overcome Satan, and to prosper in His grace. But, we still need to operate within Christ's parameters, using His armor and weapons. If we do not, we will fail; we do not have the strength of the Strong Man—only God does!

How sad it is that as the demons cried out, "this is none of your business," we too make such heinous proclamations to the very Lord who crossed a storm to redeem us! He, who bridged the gap of sin we could never cross, and paved the way for our salvation and sanctification. He allows us to remain in the boat with Him, even inviting us to go with Him.

Casting out demons does no good unless the person repents, and seeks God's will and not his own (Heb. 6:4-6). Jesus' point was that they were so wicked, they kept inviting the demons back in! The Holy Spirit is the only One who so occupies the entire room of the soul that there is no room for demon possession (Rom. 8:9). We may be bothered and harassed by demons, but as a child of Christ, who's Spirit dwells within us, there is no room for them!

Christians can stand against Satan by following the precepts of John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; James 4:7; and 1 John 4:1. God gives us all of the armor we need to defend ourselves.

God calls us to be earnest, that is, to be pursuing a serious, deep-rooted, and determined faith. It is a call to persist in our faith and determination, regardless of obstacles—physical limitations, spiritual depression, spiritual warfare, or our circumstances. If everything came to us instantly, there would be no growth, no appreciation, no maturity, and no faith. Faith requires resistance and struggle to make it flourish and grow. God is not the One Who always holds us back; it is usually our refusal to reach out and seize the opportunity. It is we who refuse to exercise our faith and grow. It is we who speak just a simple prayer with no earnest thought behind it, with no zeal, or realization of God's mercy and grace. We get so caught up in our own struggles that we do not look past the crowd to call His Name. We do not realize that He will stop, look, and listen—just for us!

## **Our response to Satan's lies (Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 4:1; James 4:7):**

- We are to submit to God's will (2 Cor. 11:3;14-15) Satan's ways look good and appealing, but God's way is the way that is best; Satan's way is death. It is better to be poor and honest, than rich and dishonest! We are to obey God's will. (2 Tim. 3:16) This is our sure fire response to temptation, just as our Lord used!
- We are to focus on the Cross. (John 14:6) We are to ignore the human standards, remember that Jesus died for us and that no sin is too big for Him to deal with and forgive. No matter what we have gone through, He is there for us, loving us. Satan wants us to diminish the cross by adding to it with penance; Christ wants us to repent!
- We need to commit to God's Purpose. (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Luke 8:11-12; John 11:25-26) Not our will and dreams and aspirations, but totally surrender to Christ all of our plans and desires no matter where it takes us.
- Remember Satan's pride brought him down (How is your pride doing?) to the lowest of levels and he is certain of his fate. His current ambition is to deceive as many of humanity possible to share with him in his fate.

God gives all of the armor we need to defend ourselves (2 Cor. 10:4). So we are to trust Him and use Him and His gifts and tools! We are to have them on and be holding them, and using them, especially militant prayer! It is our responsibility to have the armor of God on and to be ready to be attacked. If we are watchful and prepared, then we are ready for the attack of the devil, his demons, and those fiery darts. We may not all know how to attack with the Sword of the Spirit, which is why we have the rest of the armor. If we are not ready to properly use the Sword Of the Spirit, then we need to do as II Timothy 2:15 calls us to: *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* When we have all of the gear of the armor then we are to, *"With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.."* (Eph 6:18)

Fire and Brimstone, the Reality of Hell!

**Have you ever wondered what we are being saved from?**

This is not a pleasant, happy subject, but, nonetheless, it is extremely important for those whose call it is to help save the lost. (By the way, all Christians have this call!) We are saved, by Christ, from God's wrath and an eternity in Hell! But, what is Hell? "Hell" is a name that evokes both fear and contempt. It evokes fear from those who consider it the most heinous place conceivable and where they do not want to go. It raises contempt from those who consider it a figment of someone's distorted imagination, while others will argue that it was invented as a concept to keep people with a weak mindset in line. Some will trivialize it; others will joke about it; many will take it so lightly that they never consider its authenticity, or perhaps go so far as to seek to de-claw its power.

Some pastors will never preach on it either to soften the Gospel to make it more palatable, or they just do not fully believe it themselves, asking, *how can a loving God send someone to Hell?* Whatever your view of Hell may be, there is no theological concept that has wreaked such terror and fear at its core. There are no Biblical precepts that cause people to cower or to wake up from their sins and see the reality of our Lord's coming more than this one. Yet, the same concept will build resentment in others, and harden their contemptuous hearts toward God. Or, it may be to some just an academic idea to postulate and then ridicule.

Perhaps, people think of these words:

Through me the way into the suffering city; through me the way to the eternal pain; through me the way that runs among the lost. Justice urged on my high artificer. My maker was divine authority, the highest wisdom, and the primal love. Before me nothing but eternal things were made, and I endure eternally. Abandon every hope, ye who enter here.

These words come from the writings of the philosopher, Dante, in his *Inferno* (1265-1321). Dante describes all of the wickedness and circles of torment and suffering, and is our source for the imagery of red devils and pitchforks in a fiery furnace.

Perhaps, Hell is just a swear word we say when we stub our toe or lose a job. Perhaps, it is just a statement we cite to describe a bad experience, such as, "this was hell for me," or, "war is hell." Hell has also been a descriptive term to explain the worst conceivable experience or situation a human may face here on earth, such as a war, a divorce, a loss, or just a bad day. But, is it real?

### **Is there really a Hell?**

The question that comes up in academic and church circles is, *is there a Hell?* The bad news is, yes; there is a Hell and there will be a Judgment! But, with the bad news, there is good news, too. The good news is that those in Christ

will be saved from it! What are we saved from? The answer, surprisingly, is not our evil and sin; rather it is God's wrath. Our evil provokes God, but it is His righteousness, holiness, and justice that will demand our punishment (Isa. 2:11-12; 13:6-13; Ezek. 30:2-3; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; 3:1; 3:14; Amos 5:18-21; Obadiah 15; Zeph. 1:7; 1:14-2:2). Make no mistake; Hell is real, and it is coming. It is not a figment of an oppressive regime's imagination to keep people in line or a tactic to scare children at night. It is not just a swear word or a term used to trivialize or describe something bad. The Bible is clear; there is a Hell. It is a real place, a place you do not want to be. The question you need to ask yourself is, *are you saved from it?* If not, you have the biggest problem a person could ever face!

## What is Hell?

The Bible tells us Hell is a real place of darkness and separation with an eternal torment of fire (1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 7-13; Rev. 5:13; 14:11; 19:3; 20:10). It is a total absence of the love of God and His character (Rom. 2:6-12; Heb. 12:29). The English word "Hell" is translated from the Greek words *geenna* and *hades* (Matt. 5:22; 29-30; 10:28; 11:23; 16:18; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Luke 10:15; 12:5; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; James 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:10-15). It is an eternal place of final punishment, of torment, gnashing of teeth, captivity, and a place for fallen angels (Jude 13; Rev. 20:10). The Hebrew word *Sheol* has the equivalent meaning (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Duet. 32:22; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Sam. 22:6; 1 Kings 2:6, 9; Job 7:9; 11:8; 14:13; 17:13; 21:13; 24:19; 26:6; Psalm 9:17; 16:10; 18:5; 55:15; 86:13; 116:3; 139:8; Prov. 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; Isa. 5:14; 14:9, 15; 28:15, 18; 57:9; Ezek. 31:16-17; 32:21, 27; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2; Hab. 2:5), which refers to "the grave," meaning *the unseen place for the dead* and, for some, the tormenting world of the rejecters of God.

The term *hell fire*, in Hebrew (*Gehenna*), also refers to the *Valley of Hinnom*, the place where the heinous child sacrifices took place under Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Chron. 28; 33). Jeremiah referred to it as the *Valley of Slaughter* (Jer. 7:32). This was the wickedest place a Jewish mind could conceive of, and where the first century Jews burned their trash. It also refers to everlasting torment (Mark 9:43-48).

*Gates of Hades* (Matt. 22: 1-22) refers to the realm and power of death, and not necessarily the actual place of Hell. *Hades* normally refers to the place of the dead, not just Hell and torment (Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13). But, in this phrase, *death itself shall not stop we who are in Christ*, it does not refer to immortality in a physical sense, but that our place in eternity is secured. Death cannot silence His message or His church—great words of hope and comfort for the soon-to-be-persecuted Church!

The Bible also describes Hell as *darkness* (Matt. 4:16, 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 27:45). This represents the grief and despair people will experience when they fully realize that their actions and determination to ignore the Gospel has put

them in Hell, cut off from the Kingdom of God. How people will harden themselves to the Gospel and God! *Furnace* is also a term for Hell (Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:41-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:10-15) which is the final place for all those who reject God. It is the final condemnation and judgment. God does not sentence people there; they send themselves there (Ezek. 33:11; John 3:18-21; Rom. 1:18-32; 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:9-11)!

Basically, Hell is a separation from Good and Love, but it is not “fully” separated from God, since God is omnipresent; His wrath, judgment, and punishment will be there! Remember God cannot be touched by sin, so Hell also protects Him from sin! However, His perfect justice will be there, too! If we just think of it as separation, it has no teeth of terror! But then again, what is more desolate and terrifying than to be cut off from God? The Bible speaks of its terror, yet it is not cruel and unusual punishment; God is still just; He is not cruel. People there will see God, but will not be able to participate in His blessing and kindness, nor will there be any hope for them. This is for eternity—no annihilation, no escape, no repentance, and no relief. This Hell is not to be rationalized away; it is to be taken seriously and literally (Rom. 6:15-16)!

### **Is Hell Just a Metaphor?**

Many scholars will argue that these terms are merely symbolic to create fear, but are not literal. However, the Bible is using and defining words for a place that is out of the bounds of human comprehension. Thus, using colloquial (everyday language at that time which the people knew and understood) words to which one could relate like *lake of fire*, *eternal damnation*, *torment*, *separation*, *where the worm does not die*, *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, to name a few, were descriptive words. They were symbols to convey the veracity of Hell, a place no one had ever been or seen, with words one could comprehend. In fact, the certainty of the imagery indicates it will be far more severe than mere words or imagination can ever fathom! Such imagery is necessary, as we need a kick in the pants to get us out of our comfort zones and into thinking about reality and things to come. In contrast, Heaven is far more wondrous than we could ever dream of! Whatever your view of Hell may be, it is a reality that must be faced!

### **How do we know about Hell?**

Jesus tells us (Rev. 1:18)! In fact, most of what we know comes from His teachings. He talks more about Hell than about Heaven! Just take a look at these phrases from Jesus: *Everlasting fire* and *punishment*. Jesus is saying that Hell is an eternal punishment. The punishment of Hell is endless, as is the eternal blessedness for the Christian who is saved by grace. This is why evangelism and witnessing are so important (Job. 26:6; Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 15:1-4)! We need to proclaim Christ as Savior to help save people from this eternal damnation (Matt. 18:8; John 5:24)!

## **Where is Hell?**

A famous Soviet astronaut, Alexei Leonov, on March 18, 1965 during the first spacewalk outside the Voskhod 2 spacecraft said he did not see Heaven; thus, he surmised it did not exist and that God did not exist. People who drill miles beneath the surface for oil say they have not dug into Hell yet, so it must not exist either. But, Hell is not below the surface of earth, nor is Heaven above in the clouds. The imagery used to describe Heaven and Hell utilizes earthly languages, but does not infer an actual place. The fact is, we do not know where they are. The best we can do is think of them as extra dimensions in space/time, but even this theory has its flaws as we seek human understanding for something we cannot fathom (Prov. 9:18; 15:24; Isa. 5:14; Ezek. 26:20-21; 31:16; Eph. 4:8-10).

## **Why must there be Hell?**

God is Holy (Neh. 9:32-33; Isaiah 6:3; 2 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 4:8). He hates sin, and He cannot be contaminated or touched by it (Psalm 5:5-6; Hab. 1:13). Thus, God punishes the sinner because of his or her evil (Jer. 50:31; Ezek. 44:12; Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 10:29; Jude 7-13). Hell is not just a Christian concept; it is also rooted in Judaism. Most Jews believed in Hell; however, they were divided as to what it was, when it happened, and how long it lasted. Most believed it was for just a short duration. Jesus takes Hell away from the philosopher's debates and makes it clear that Hell and judgment are real and are coming. We must be prepared in our spiritual formation and our proclamation to others about it!

## **How does a person go to Hell?**

Hell is a place where those who have been judged are sent because of their condemnation (Matt. 25:41-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). This is a part of Christ's divine authority over the Final Judgment when all those who refused to accept His grace will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20). Hell is where our sins and willful rejection of God's grace can continue after our sentencing; it is by the personal choice of the person to be there. It is where those who are judged can continue their rebellion and contempt of a caring and loving God, where they choose darkness rather than His Light.

## **What about people who never heard of Jesus or the Gospel?**

The answer is found in Romans, chapter one—what theologians call "General Revelation." It means *we have no excuse*. God's influence, glory, and presence are all around us, referred to as "mediated revelation". This is not *pantheism*, which teaches that everything is God, that creation itself is God. "G.R." means that God is all present, "omnipresent", and we have no escape from Him; His presence is revealed to us in His creation. "G.R." also means that

we, as humans, are religious by nature and seek a higher purpose and order. God uses that nature to make Himself known, or, "Immediate Revelation." God plants an innate sense of who He is within each of us, even without the Word or missions (Psalm 19; Isa. 44:9-20; Acts 14:8-19; 17: 16:34; Rom. 1:18-23; 2:14-15; Col. 3:5). In contrast "Special Revelation" is the Bible. God directly inspired it and it is the ultimate source and superintendent of the original manuscripts, without any error. He used the human authors as tools, as word processors. "S.R." is His will for our faith and the practice of life and duty, law and grace, and His plan and our purpose. (Psalm 119; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)

### **How did we get to the place that God built a Hell?**

This is also found in the Bible and the theological concept called "The Fall." Up until the "Fall," humanity and the all of the "Heavenly Host" drew its support and substance directly from God, in perfect relationship; and when they fell, it was all gone. Satan and the 1/3 of the Angels fell first (Isa 14:12; Eze. 29:12-19; Luke 10:18; 1Tim. 3:6), *eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:41), then Humanity fell (Gen 3). Paul, in his epistles, reaffirms that all of human-kind is separated from God due to the act of sin by the first created humans, Adam and Eve. Thus, we are all under the curse, or "guilt" of sin, and are incapable of rejoining God in our once perfect state on our own (Gen 3; Acts 17:26; Rom. 1:18-19; 3:9; 19; 5:12-17; 21; 1 Cor. 15:22). God's judgment and wrath are now with us.

So, the question now becomes, *is this fair?* Yes, it is fair! Adam and Eve represent all of humanity; you and I would have made the same decisions they made! Thus, we are all to blame! We, as humans, have a perversity to go our own way, which is the wrong way, paved with undeserving pride and arrogance! On the other hand, it was *not* fair! Consider; was it fair for One Man (God), who was guiltless, to pay a penalty that He did not deserve? Not fair indeed (Rom. 5:15-19; 8:29-30; 9:22-26)! God gave Adam and Eve true happiness and perfection with only one rule; *do not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge...* (Gen 2:17). Adam and Eve had to decide who makes the rules, and determine what was good or bad. Ultimately, they sought themselves over God, to be their own god. They also decided to be swayed and misled when they already had the correct knowledge—first by Satan, then by each other (Gen 3; 2 Cor. 11:3; 14; Rev. 12:9). Thus, the selfish, self-centered mindset entered humanity, and sin was birthed.

Sin then corrupted everything—people, animals, the earth, and all of creation (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 3:9-20). As a result, we inherited the guilt and shame of being apart from our Creator, forcing us to either try to seek Him in vain attempts, or push our self-interests to the exclusion of God and His glory. God was not without mercy, for His first act was to cover Adam and Eve with garments! Then He promised a Savior!



## **What is the Wrath of God?**

If God is love, why is He angry at us? The wrath of God is to be taken seriously, especially by those who reject Him. We need to understand God's Righteousness. He is absolutely Pure and Holy, while we are full of heinous sin, no matter how good we try to be. God is also a God of judgment; He has the right, authority, and power to judge us as His creation. And, we have no excuse because God has placed this knowledge within our consciences. Thus, when we reject God and follow our own needs and ideas, we are, in fact, inviting His wrath and judgment upon us. We cannot think or say, "Hey, I did not know," because we do know! There is no righteousness by the Law or by our works! All have sinned; all are condemned! If all we do is live for ourselves, we miss out on what life is all about, on God, and on relationships that honor God (Rom. 1:18-3:20; 3:23; 6:23). The Wicked suppress God's truth and His character, and that is what makes them wicked! Remember, we have no excuse; God revealed Himself through His creation.

So, the answer is, *sin* made God angry! When Adam fell, the Spirit left him immediately, not gradually! The wrath of God is to be taken seriously, especially by those who reject Him! Sin is a reality and affects us all; we must beware not to ignore God. There will be an accounting for us all—a judgment!! Beware not to live for the creatures and the created while ignoring the Creator! We also need to beware that our rationalizations and intellectual arrogance will convince us Hell is not real and that God is not angry! Sin will lead to destruction; it is an extreme insult to God to think otherwise (1 Cor. 2:14).

Also, life is not about me and you; it is about God! This doctrine of Hell helps us realize we cannot know God unless we know ourselves, and we cannot know ourselves without first knowing God: hence, the cause is the Holy Spirit to help us know God is essential or we would never know Him (Gen. 1:27; Psalm 51; Acts 14:8-18; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-23)! This helps us in understanding our depravity and state in Christ. When the focus is just on ourselves, we are lost; if it is just on God, we become meaningless and worthless for Him to use. As the saying goes, "so heavenly-minded, we are of no earthly good."

## **Will God send someone to Hell who does not deserve it?**

We have to consider our sin, as we all *deserve* Hell! It is by God's grace we are saved from it! God reveals Himself through creation (General Revelation), thus we have no excuse. His moral character and duty is in all human kind; it is encoded upon our heart, mind, and soul, even without knowing Scripture. All people have a natural desire to believe in religion, thus every culture of every time has had a system of beliefs. However, our sinful desire is to seek fulfillment elsewhere, including worshiping the creation over the Creator (Isa. 44:9-20; Col. 3:5).

Look at the idols in ancient cultures and compare them to what we covet and look to as idols today such as cars, clothes, money, sex, and power. Those things testify that we seek something greater than ourselves and to be a part of something bigger, that we can make a difference and have meaning outside of God. The idols that we create often turn out to be the ones we become. Thus, we corrupt the truth of God to please our desires; this is idolatry. When we reject God, we are destined to live life unfulfilled and frustrated. Because of God's revelations, every human has a conscience to know what is good or bad, but not all know God!

God clearly warns us in His Word and in our hearts with lessons such as do not give into sin, especially sexual immorality (Lev. 18:22; 21:13; Rom. 6:13; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:1-7); do not exchange the truth for a lie; do not worship the creation and forsake the Creator. He also forbids slandering others and being arrogant! We have to realize that arrogance and pride are sins "on par" with homosexuality! Even though the media likes to glorify sin, such as fornication, stealing, and lying, to name a few, we need to beware that "garbage in is garbage out!" When we persist in our sins, God may give us up to our sins, so we destroy ourselves (Gal. 6:7-8)! In fact, the greatest judgment God can give and inflict upon us is to allow us to have our own way (Jer. 17:9-11)! *God gave them over* (Rom. 1: 24-27) refers to "Penal Blindness" by some theologians. It is God's wrath to let us stew in our own decisions and sin, and let the natural consequences play out for what we have set up for ourselves (Psalm 81:12; Isa. 6:9-11; 29:9-12; Jer. 44:25-27).

Sin is reality and it will damn you! Remember, pride is in the same sin category as homosexuality; it is also one of the seven things God detests (Job 41:34; Psalm 10:5; 18:27; 101:5; 131:1; Prov. 6:17-18; 21:4; 30:13)! The barrier of sin becomes the ignition for continuing in sin; it is as synergy, like an out-of-control fire. Woe to those who know, yet turn their backs! The same God of judgment gave us His Son and delivers us (Rom. 8:32). So, are you living your life in response to your undeserved salvation with gratitude? Are you sharing it with others? You can see for yourself by going to Romans, chapters one and two, where there is a laundry list of sin (see study [Online Bible Study 42](#) for more on this). If you persist in sin, you will be given up to it (Lev. 18; Amos 1-2).

Sin is serious; it is something we are not to just glance over thinking we are OK (Rom. 2:1-11; 3:10-26; 5:12-19; James 1:13-15; 1 John 1:8-10). Sin is something we need to try as hard as we can to purge from our lives. In a pure sense, you will never completely remove it; nevertheless, we are still called to try with all of our will and might. Even though Christ covers us, we are still responsible for allowing the Spirit and the disciplines of the faith to cleanse us. And, in so doing, we can be our best for His glory. Do not allow yourself or your friends and loved ones to fall into sin and trap themselves in its heinous clutches, as it distorts and destroys! As Christians who are covered by Christ's

righteousness, we must be willing to let go before we can hold on. Let go of sin and hold on to our Lord! Ask Him what you need to do and He will reveal it to you; make sure you are in His Word and listening!

### **Fortunately for us we have victory in Christ!**

God saves us from Hell and our sins!!! But, we still have to accept His gift of Grace, by faith, for it to be active and effective in us (Psalm 32:5; Matt. 7:7-8; John 1:12; 3:16; 10:27-29; 14:6; 20:31; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 5:16; Phil. 4:13; 1 John 1:9)!

### **Are all of the pagans lost?**

Paul intelligibly states that those without the Law will yet "*perish*" without the Law (Rom. 2:12). So, how can a person be justly condemned if he has never heard the Gospel? Paul answers in this way: every man has a conscience, and no one has ever lived up to what he knows to be right (General Revelation). Every person knows they should do certain "moral" things, and not do certain "wrong" things. This is tested and shown to be true every time people pass judgment on the actions of others (Rom. 2:1). Yet, no one can honestly claim that he or she has lived up to what they should! Because of this, God can judge all of humanity, and find them lacking, because none has ever lived up to the light of his or her own conscience. So, is God being fair? Yes!

### **What gives God the right to send people to Hell?**

Scripture teaches that God is absolutely "just" (Gen. 18:25; Luke 12:47-48; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 2:6), will reward everyone according to his or her works, and there will be degrees of punishment. Because, He is God and Creator! We can have confidence and trust in His provisions and His judgments!

### **Should we not preach about Hell so to save people from it?**

Hell is truth that will be seen to late, we need to let people get a glimpse now (Matt. 23:33)! Remember, we have no excuse; we must teach it and preach it because it is real and it is coming. We cannot make it go away by ignoring it! So, a question will arise in mission and evangelism committees in most churches like this: "Would it be safer not to preach the Gospel to the lost in fear that if they reject the Gospel, they would be lost forever?" (This is "Hyper Calvinism") If a person could be saved without hearing the Gospel, or simply *because* he has not heard, then it would logically be safer not to preach the Gospel, so that no one would hear, and all would be saved! The Church, as a whole, for centuries did little to no evangelism for this reason! But, what did our Lord teach?

Even today, with the modern mission movements behind us leading the way, a lot of churches still do not participate in evangelism and missions. They

reason that there is no rationale for any evangelism or missionary endeavors. Or, they rationalize there is no Hell so there is no reason to witness because we are not saving anyone from anything! The point is that Christ commands every Christian to preach the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:18-20), because only through one's faith in Christ can anyone receive salvation. The Bible does not teach that most people will be saved; rather, Jesus Himself said that most will be lost, and only a few saved (Matt. 7:14)! Our call is to continue His mission no matter how people respond!

If we try to preach or witness gently, as in not telling people about or explaining away Hell, we do an extreme disservice! We do not make the Gospel more palatable; rather, we water it down so much, it is of no taste or value. We will be giving people an incomplete view of God and of judgment. Trust in God and put your confidence in His sovereignty. He will not condemn anyone who does not want to be condemned. At the same time, we are called to witness boldly with passion, care, and love. When we refuse to tell people about Hell, we are not loving them, we are lying to them! Yes, God desires that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Pet. 2:3; 1 John 4:8-10). However, not all will receive Him.

### **What will people's attitudes be like in Hell?**

Notice in many of the Matthew verses, the term "gnashing of teeth" is used. This refers to rage or anguish, coupled with frustration and a desire to destroy the opponent. Literally, it means that the person who rejects God wants to destroy God, just as Satan seeks to do, but he cannot except in his deluded mind! "Gnashing" is also associated with the word "weeping," which means a despairing remorse of sorrow, regret, and extreme grief for one's decisions and mistakes. In Hell, the person who is there will be a hater of God and filled with remorse—not a pleasant picture; thus, his or her torment and suffering will be his or her own feelings and anguish while he or she can look on to Paradise and see what they could have had, but now they cannot. Remember; there will be no one in Hell who does not want to be there!

### **How can I believe in Hell when I have never seen it; has it been documented by others?**

After all, no one has come back from Hell to say, *hey, it is hot—do not go there!* Hell helps us realize the ultimate reversal of fortune if we rely on our frail imperfect reasoning over God's pure perfection. God is righteous and He is revealed through His creation (Gen 3:4-5). That brings us back to this point; we have no excuse (Psalm 19:1)! Man desires and seeks the tangible, hence the making of the golden calf (Ex. 32:4); God is revealed in intangible ways. If we allow our rationalities to lead us or our theology to become liberal, we must consider that theological decay turns into moral decay as an excuse to rationalize our sin. If our view of God and Hell becomes distorted, so will our behavior. That is called trading a truth for a lie, rationalizing our behaviors by attacking our very

Creator and Savior. Nor, can we have a good relationship with God and not with each other, or vice versa (Psalm 37:23; 1 Thess. 5:18)!

**Will there be a second chance once we die so we can reconsider our decision?**

NO! Nowhere in Scripture is it even alluded that there will be a second chance. Nor, is there any indication that those in Hell will be annihilated at some point (Rev. 10:10-15).

**Will people go to Hell who do not deserve to?**

No! The Bible warns us and gives us a clear picture that our refusal to deal with sin through repentance will have lasting and dire consequences, both here on earth and for eternity to come! Remember; God is just, loving, and caring. In fact, if God sent a person to Heaven who did not want to go there, that would not be justice or love, would it? The people in Hell are there because they sent themselves there. They chose it and they know they deserve it (Psalm 1:6; 9:17; 94:13; Mark 16:16; John 3:18-21; Rom. 1:18-32; 13:2; 1 Cor. 6:8-10; Gal. 5:21; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 1 Tim. 5:12)! This points to the need to be clothed in Christ; His covering makes us secure in God's sight (Zach. 3:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:14; Rev. 3:18; 19:8).

Remember that God is *just* in His wrath. We cannot go to Him and say, *I am a good person and do not deserve this*. We all deserve death and Hell, but by God's grace, through our faith, we can be with Him, saved for eternity! We are all guilty before Him! There are no favorites with God unless you accept His free gift. No one person is better than another—by religion, race, creed, or what you have contributed to society. No works can help you excel in His acceptance; that comes only by what Christ has done! We cannot stand before God and bargain our way to Heaven because we have no righteousness on our own. When we do accept Christ, we should have the desire to please Him and to excel to benefit society and His glory. We must realize the impact of sin in all aspects of society and all aspects of our lives (Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9; Mark 9:43-48; Romans 3:9-20). Also we need to be grateful for what God did for us. You and I, as well as all of the 10+ billion people who ever lived, deserve Hell too! Period! But, it is by His grace we receive a pardon from it (Matt. 5:29-30; 13:48-50)!

**But God is a God of Love; how does God's judgment show His love?**

God is love, and one of the aspects of love is that it protects (1 Cor. 13:7)! God is protecting His elect—those of us in Him—from further evil. God loves us so much He respects our choice, even when it is to reject Him! We choose who we will be with for eternity. If God did not love us, He would force us to be with Him! Love is a choice! Going to Hell is also a choice!

## **Why is talking about Hell important?**

Life is short and eternity is forever, so should we be playing games with all of our everlasting futures? We must be aware of the serious, destructive nature of sin; repentance is essential! Sin is a cancer in our soul. We must be convinced that sin is extremely destructive, to us as well as those around us, as it will spread and consume us from within! Our life on earth is not our ultimate hope or reality. This is mainly a place to learn and grow. Thus, what we do or do not do here will echo throughout eternity, and determine our place in the future with rewards or condemnation! Do not let the lust of your flesh rule your heart and rob you of your future. Rather, seek forgiveness, and safeguard your future actions!

The good news is, God is willing and able to save us from Hell. But, are we willing to accept His love and free gift? Strange as it may be, most people refuse (Ezek. 33:11; Matt. 5:29-30)! God is faithful, and He chooses to save us (elects) even though we do not earn it or deserve it. He does this, not by foreknowledge, even though He has it, but, rather, according to His purpose (Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). However, God does not force Himself upon us. His grace is offered; we have to accept it by faith alone, which is a willingness to listen, the ability to practice real authentic faith, to be willing to trust Him regardless of our circumstances, and to give Him our surrendered obedience.

We have to realize our commitment to Him may seem severe, yet the wonder, joy, and benefits far outweigh any sacrifice! We, as Christians saved by His work, are the heirs to the Kingdom. This includes the entire world—everyone who has ever lived and will ever live have and will have received the Word and the invitation, yet few will accept it. We cannot just barge into Heaven either, because we need His covering, His clothes, which are also freely given to us by our faith. We are only presentable when we have His covering, lest our sin show and alienate us from God as enemies (Matt. 22: 1-22).

## **I am a Christian; why do I need to learn about Hell?**

What we can learn from this is to follow God's commission and not our desires and practices. We are to realize our privilege in having the Truth to study, learn, grow in, and proclaim, because it has been revealed to us. We have the "Pearl of Great Price;" let us learn it and live it! Let us display it with honor and glory regardless of the sacrifice, because our treasure is far more valuable than anything we could ever possibly give up!

If this all scares you, well it should! But, do not despair; it is faith that determines our eternal destiny, not our birthright, ideas, or works. Those who chose Hell refused Christ, and took themselves or Satan as their lead. We all have been warned; we all know better! But, let Hell's veracity help motivate you

to be a light so people will see the Light! Be a witness, a carrier of the grace and person of our Lord by demonstrating His work in you!

God is faithful and He chooses to save us (elects) even though we do not earn it or deserve it. He does this, not by foreknowledge (even though He has it),but, rather, according to His purpose (Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). On the other hand, God does not force Himself upon us. His grace is offered; we have to accept it by faith alone which requires the precepts of these parables, which include a willingness to listen, the ability to practice real authentic faith, to be willing to trust Him regardless of our circumstances, and our surrendered obedience. With these precepts we can seize the knowledge that Christ will prevail greatly with a minute for the vastness of His glory. Thus, we can have the faith and confidence in our Lord who gives us the hope to press on to the call and circumstances He gives us! We are the minute as our abilities and qualifications fall short and would be impossible for us to do anything grand; but, in Him we can!

Sometimes, God has to get our attention though adversity; sometimes, we have a willingness to listen. He has to break our pride and misplaced priorities. The key Jesus uses is that He explains to us how we are able to receive Him. Are we able and willing to understand? Sometimes, that may not happen until eternity, as it was with Job. Our key is to trust, and know that He is in control and He will be with us, carrying us through. It is not about understanding ourselves; rather, it is in understanding Him. Ask Him to show you His deep hidden treasures, and also be willing to listen and grow.

As Christians, we must realize that we, too, are unworthy. That is why grace is so special and faith is so vital in overcoming our sin and depravity. Even though we do not deserve Christ and His grace, we can boldly ask and have fellowship with Him, and have the confidence that He is there listening and working in our best interests all of the time (Matt. 5: 27-30; Rom. 8; Gal. 1:16 Phil. 4:8-9).

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## **Why does God allow Evil?**

**This subject is often called, “The Problem of Evil”**

*There is evil for there is no doubt; is it trying to get in you, or trying to get out?*

**“Evil!”** When this word is proclaimed, images come to mind of Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, a sadistic serial killer, or the mother who murders her own children. Perhaps Rwanda, Bosnia, the Killing Fields, concentration camps, gang violence, rape, heinous abuse, and murder are all images of evil.

There is little dispute that such actions are evil; but, have you considered that evil can also be *anything* that goes against God? We may not think of ourselves as evil; perhaps sinners, moreover, sinners redeemed by a loving, caring God, but what about the things we do? Do our actions and mindsets line up to His precepts? Do we model the character and fruit to which we are called? Have you considered that when we do not, we are being evil?

We may not be murdering others or causing genocide, but when we oppress others or cause any harm by our actions, or our inactions to stop it, we are, in God’s eyes and as revealed by His Word, being evil! We see sin as anything that goes against God, and evil as worse, but in God’s eyes, it is all the same. There are varying degrees, yes. Stealing bread to feed one’s family does not compare to the exploits of Saddam Hussein. However, the fact is, our rebellion toward God is sin; and, sin produces evil!

### **An Example of Evil**

There is a man in my men’s group at my church who has been a victim of evil. He was not in a concentration camp or caught up in a drive-by shooting, but he is as much a victim of evil as anyone could be. The spouse of a famous political figure molested his young child. When he found out about it, he went to the police and the District Attorney who quickly investigated and began prosecution. However, because this family is well known, very rich, and *connected*, they hired a well-known criminal defense attorney and private investigators that made it their crusade to “turn the tables” on my friend.

The attorney decided it was in the best interest of his client to create a media image of rhetoric to make my friend out to be the criminal, and his client the victim. Suddenly, the media was out in force at my friend’s home and an international media story unfolded. The private investigator’s job was to plant evidence, harass the family, intimidate them to drop the allegations, to manipulate city officials, and use the media to refocus the attention from the criminal to the victim.

Swiftly, my friend because of the constant harassment was unable to work, his wife left him, his son turned to drugs, he became very ill, and his family was in total disarray. This has gone on for several years now. My friend was able to maintain good Christian character and become an inspiration to me and others. Such commitment came about by much prayer and the wondrous work of the Spirit in his life. His take on the situation was to seek to pray, to remain true to Christ, and to love. He would show up for court early and disguised—not only seeking to avoid the media frenzy, but so he could pray.

Where is the evil in this? That political family took action beyond defending themselves by using the proper legal resources. They were being totally self-absorbed and into a sociopathic state. They did not care for the truth or for the



real victim—the child who went through a heinous experience. They sought to discredit and cause irrevocable harm and grief to an innocent family. They sought to manipulate their sin into a political weapon to destroy an innocent family; they continue to do so today. The pariahs, the social, deviant outcasts, sought to make their victims the pariah.

I had the opportunity to speak with this defense attorney. I realize it is his job to do all he can to protect his client—within the parameters of the law. (He greatly exceeded that.) He was defending a friend of a friend in another manner and I happened to be in an elevator with him, which gave me an opportunity to speak with him. I asked him if he thought what he was doing was wrong. He said, “Absolutely not! I have every right to destroy that “@#%&\* (insert colorful slang/metaphor) family!” I asked “Why? Knowing that they are the real victims, this child was molested, and the family did nothing wrong to instigate or deserve this extreme oppression and abuse from your client whether he is guilty or not, do you believe it is OK to seek to literally destroy them further?” He replied, “No!”

Then he said, “Truth is *whose* truth. My truth is my client, and that is my only concern.” Then I said, “I know you have to defend your client, guilty or innocent, but have you ever considered that you have gone too far?” He said “NO!” Then I asked, “Hypothetically, would you consider that destroying innocent families to get a heinous criminal “off” to be evil?” He said, “I do not believe in evil!” Then the elevator door opened, and that was the end of that conversation. I was left dumfounded.

I wondered if people who do evil (whether it is a Hitler or a renegade criminal defense attorney who goes way too far) know they are evil, or at least know they are doing evil. After all, we, as humans, can easily become self-absorbed and we can rationalize anything. What about me, when I want something that I know I should not and cannot have? Am I being evil? What is evil? And, what am I doing about it?

After some *exegetical* research, I found that the degree of separation of a Christian who sins and one who does evil is that the person who does evil does not care. The one who sins and is then convicted that it is wrong, repents. The evil person does not care and is not convicted or broken. When David sinned by having Uriah murdered, it was evil because it was for his personal agenda. That was evil—pure and simple. However, David then was convicted, he had remorse, and then he repented (2 Sam. 11-12; Psalm 32:3-5). If you sin and do not care or have remorse, then you have a problem with evil (Judges 17:6)!

It is a popular misconception that humans are basically good. Spend time with any two-year-old and you will learn that our sinful nature is on the forefront—not our goodness. Cute? Yes! But, the “no” and disobedience are the main shows of the day! If you read Scripture, you will find out what God has to say on this matter (Gen. 3:1-24; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 2:1-11; 3:10-26; 5:12-19; 7:23; 8:1-11; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19; Titus 1:15; James 1:12-15; 1 John 1:8-10). The uniqueness of our humanity is we do not need to learn how to be bad at stuff. We are naturally good at hating and seeking evil just as a two-year-old comes to us unable to behave. It is a part of our sinful nature (1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:4). Thus, to grow beyond this filth of *works* (Galatians 5: 19-21), we have to

realize the necessity of the cross (2 Cor. 5:11) for our lives—not just for salvation but also for our daily lives. We are not basically good; we are foundationally evil, fallen, corrupted, and infused by sin. What Christ did for us helps make us willing to learn to apply the *Fruit of the Spirit* so we can *continue to walk in the truth* (Galatians 5: 22-23; Eph 2:1-10; 3 John 1:2-4).

## What is Evil?

In various religious and secular circles, Evil has been described as “vice,” or something that is “depraved,” meaning *morally objectionable*. It is a malignant or malevolent principle, behavior, or deed that influences and practices; it brings about harm, destruction, and misfortune to others by direct action or inaction of the perpetrator. In most classic Christian thinking, Evil is anything that is not of God. From a biblical, theological construct, evil is sin and a form of adultery! It is adultery to God from our willful, moral rebellion against God. It is literally cheating on Him with our desires, lusts, and sins from what He has called and planned for us. It is humans’ seeking that which is contrary to His will such as hatred and bigotry (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3; Rev. 21:4).

There are two, main kinds of evil; one is natural evil (floods, storms, famines, etc.) that comes from the corruption of sin in the world. The other is moral evil (such as murder, sexual abuse, adultery, idolatry, etc.). However, many theologians say there is only one form of evil because *natural* evil is a result of our moral evil because of “Original Sin”—the sin that affects all of creation (people and planets)—the result of Adam's sin entering the world, allowing natural disasters such as fires, floods, storms, famines, etc.

As sin is rebellion against God, spiritual betrayal, and being disobedient (Jer. 31:32; Hosea, chaps 1-3; Eph. 4:30; James 2:23), we are not as bad as we could be. We are not utterly depraved as we still have, as Calvin said, “civil good.” This means we are capable of doing good works because we have a conscience, even though we are still corrupted by sin (Luke 11:39-44; Rom. 2:12-16; 14:23; Titus 1:15). Evil, meaning malevolence or extreme vice, goes further than sin. It means to have malicious and spiteful desires, and it comes about from the exploits of a “self absorbed” mindset in a person who has no regard for others and/or no fear of God (Rom. 3:10-18). Evil is badness, cruelty, ruthlessness, depravity, debauchery, and immorality—out of control. It is being merciless and unscrupulous in our dealings toward others. Evil is not merely a psychological disorder such as being a sociopath; it is a condition of the soul (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 1:18-32). It is an act of “playing God” or being self-indulgent, so we think we have the final authority, and then we act on it out of spite. Only God has the final authority (Eph. 6:12; James 4: 13-17)! We have to realize that our lives are far better in His arms of love and care than with our whims and limited ideas (2 Cor. 5:16-17)!

Evil is man being so arrogant that he ignores God, His love, and His plan! To ignore what Christ has done for us is considered evil, both for the Christian and the non-Christian! We have the ability to ignore the heart of the cross, but we

do not have the right to ignore God. This also includes ignoring what Christ did on the cross on our behalf (1 John 4:4)!

### **Where did Evil Come From?**

Evil stemmed from Satan and his rebellion (Isaiah 14:12-15), and is continued on by humanity (Matt. 15:18-19). Prior to the Fall, man lived in total paradise; it was rebellion against God that caused sin to enter and corrupt everything. We turned against God and hated Him and pursued our lives in destructive endeavors against His will (Gen. 1:28; 3:17-18; Matt. 24:22; Rom. 3:19-12; 5:12-19; 8:22; Eph. 2:3). Sin is continuing the rebellion against God and His created order. All have fallen short of God's standards. "Whole evil is in man, and whole man is in evil," said Spurgeon. Sin has affected all of our being and the entire world (Rom. 3:21-26). Even if we have not committed any evil, it is still our nature to do so. It all comes down to this: we all have sinned—some more than others. But, the smallest sin falls way short of God's requirements. This is what "total depravity" and "original sin" are all about (1 Cor. 15:42-49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:10).

We, as humans, chose to fall away from God and His perfection. God desires us to live the best way possible, and experience the most out of life with happiness and joy (Matt. 1:28-29). Yet, we live in a world corrupted by sin, so everything is degraded from what it was meant to be. Man, the land, animals, plants, air—everything is touched and infused by sin. Thus, the consequences of that fallen nature impact everything. Even in this corrupted, tainted world, including our sinful selves, we have a God who offers His love and grace (John 3:16, 10:10; Rom. 5:1) if only we will reach out and respond. However, we cannot; so, His Son, the Christ, lived as we should have (Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:18). In our place, He took our sins to the grave, and arose to give us eternal hope and life.

Even with the grace option offered to us, which is written upon our hearts, we still choose to rebel (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23, 6:23). We choose to take His wonder, love, and truth, and trade it in for lies (Rom. 1:18-31). We desire to suppress His truth and love; and, when it all falls apart, we blame God and others, refusing to take the responsibility for ourselves (Gen. 3:12-13; Rom. 14:12-13)!

We have no excuse! His revelation is clear; it is filled with our best in mind, and powered by His desire to see us saved. Let us turn from our evil ways, lest we end up *given up to our desires* that will be fun for a short while, but will lead to everlasting regret and torment. It is like a parent letting his kid eat all he wants in a candy store until it makes him sick—multiplied by a thousand. We have the choice to realize sin makes us sick; thus, it is meaningless. Therefore, we can either stop, or keep at it until it kills us. Evil is knowing when it is bad, yet continuing in it, thinking and feeling, "So what if it harms others." Remember, we do not deserve His love and grace, yet He gives it to us anyway (Romans 10:9; John 1:12; Rev. 3:20).

What is the role of satanic influence? It is great (see our articles on Satan, Demons and Spiritual Warfare), but Satan's influence is limited (Job 1:6-12; Matt. 4:11-1; Mark 1:21-28; 1 Pet. 5:8-11; 1 John 4:1-6). We have to realize that we do not need Satan or the demons to do evil; we have enough sin within ourselves to permanently send ourselves to hell, corrupt and destroy all those around us, and cause destruction and chaos to all of our relationships. We need to understand this so we can be in prayer and be on guard (Isaiah 29:4; 47; Jeremiah 27:6-10; 1 Timothy 1:19-20). We need Jesus Christ in our hearts, which is the only thing that can squash evil (Rom. 10:9-10)! Our redemption frees us from the bondage of sin, something we cannot do for ourselves (Mark 10:45; 1 Cor. 1:23-25; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:15).

### **What Causes Evil?**

Our human nature loves to be in competition and to fight, but God has a higher call for us. James 4:1-6 takes us directly to the root cause of sin and evil; it all comes from one source—the conflict that resides in our own hearts! Our desires are at war with the precepts and the call of our Lord. For the Christian, this is the war between the good and evil of man versus God, of our sinful nature versus the new life in Christ. These desires converge and conflict with the desires of other people and escalate into interpersonal conflict and sin, without remorse, against others. That defense attorney, whom I am confident is not a Christian, is driven, from his lustful desire to win at all costs, to destroy an innocent family. This goes beyond his job to defend his client, and shows a total disregard for truth or justice. As Christians, we have a “governor” to help us stop, and that is the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20; John 14:17; Acts 1:8, 4:31, 10:45 Eph. 3:16-17; Hebrews 13:5-6)!

We lust and covet after what we do not have, so it controls us; that which is wrong becomes our passion and quest (Prov. 10:24; 13:23; Phil. 4:12). Then, we become jealous of others and hoard what we have while we manipulate and covet what they have. We engage in strife and fighting like wild dogs and tear at one another in conquest of the demented goals we have. In all of this, we ignore God and forsake His call and wisdom. When we do ask of Him, our motives are skewed and our passions misdirected, as we seek personal pleasures and the self, not Christ and His mission for us. Our selfish inclinations and warring attitudes that bubble up from our pride cause divisions, destroy relationships, and give our Lord a bad name (James 2:14-26; 3:13-18).

When we are only concerned with pleasing ourselves and living for the pleasures of life, we are engaging in evil and then we miss what Christ has for us. We have to see where our aim in life is pointed; is it at God, His love, and His precepts, or the foolishness of our whims? When we ignore His Scriptures, we forsake our loyalty and betray our loving Lord. He is faithful with us; we need to remain faithful to Him and not allow our desires to rule our hearts and minds.

### **The Problem of Evil**

We all know evil is real, and we all have personally experienced it in one way or another. But, a problem arises in the field of theology and philosophy. The question arises: if God is all-powerful and all loving, then why does He permit evil and suffering in the world? Why won't God just put a stop to evil?

In theology, this is called "Theodicy," the study of the problem of evil and vindication of God's goodness in the world. The issue classically attacks the sovereignty of God, and the answers are not easy, for the Bible does not give us a direct answer, nor does God need to justify His actions (Prov. 16:4 Isaiah 45:7). Why the contention? Because, we come to these issues with human reasoning and not in the parameters of God's precepts. This issue has been debated for as long as theological and philosophical thinking has existed. The secular response to evil is that God is either not *omnipotent* and therefore cannot stop it, or He is not loving and therefore *will* not stop it. To answer these objections, we have to get beyond our pain and questions, and seek God for God, that He has reasons for allowing evil to exist that are beyond our ability to comprehend (Isaiah 55:8-9 Hab. 2:4). God does not create evil; rather, evil is our insurgence against God. It is our saying to God, "Forget You! I will do as I please." If He loves us, He will allow our free will.

What about those who are innocent? What about the woman who is raped or the baby that dies? What about the 150,000+ Tsunami victims or the World Trade Center? We have to realize that all of our suffering is the result of human sin. We tend to think of those who are victims as being innocent; in some aspects they are. However, in biblical theology, no one is truly innocent; we all have sinned. *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3); thus, the evil we experience is the direct result of our sin. We can take comfort that God is still sovereign, even when we do not see it, and even in the midst of our dire circumstances!

Consider what the world would be like if God *did* stop all evil and suffering? I have prayed for this at times; but really think it through. What would be the result? There would be no growth, maturity, character, virtue, or spiritual growth as adversity is necessary for real growth. Without an adversary, we have nothing to strive against to climb higher in our spiritual formation. Our struggles produce patience through tribulation (Rom. 5:3). God is still in the world, using the world and its failures for His glory and the benefit of those who listen to Him (Gen. 50:15-21; Rom. 5:3; 8). Our struggles help point us to living by faith (Isa. 55:8-9 Hab. 2:4). Also, to stop evil would mean stopping the exercise of our free will and moral providence in choice. Even thinking of evil would be evil and would lead to evil. God would have to stop it, too. Then, we would be mere appliances of God without liberty or freedom and thus with no deep feelings. We would only be preprogrammed robots, unable to express the depth of love because we could not express hate.

Even so, evil at some point is perhaps necessary; we cannot blame God for it! Evil was not God's original plan. Yes, because God is all knowing, He would have known that evil would result from our free choices; thus, He created the "possibility" for evil, but not evil itself (Gen. 1-3). Evil is in this world because,

as fallen creatures, we were the agents in part who brought it about. So, in some aspects, God did know before the foundations of time and space that evil would come about as a result of creation and of creating people who were capable of the moral ability to choose good or bad.

It is a concept we only see from our corporeal eyes; we live in a corporal world where what we touch can either give us pleasure or hurt us; so, all of our mindsets reflect our physical nature, and it is our nature to question and seek to understand what may be un-understandable. So, we come up with the classic question, *why would a loving God allow evil?* If God exists and He is love, then, there should be no evil or, at least there should be a cap on it. What we do not understand is God's perspective and the perspective of eternity.

It is not logical to assume that something that is contradictory to our mindset of God is contradictive of God Himself. Remember, God is eternal and beyond our comprehension; we can only know God by how He revealed Himself to us, through His Word. Thus, anything contradictory to what we think is bad is a result of an uncaring God or a God who cannot or will not respond. The justice of God is in the scope of eternity; it is not in our time frame, nor should it be evaluated by our limited reasoning (Psalm 73:17-27). Because God does respond, we just tend to ignore Him and focus upon our situation or ourselves. Our thinking is incomplete; we do not have the facts or the reasoning power, as life is beyond what we know and what affects us personally (Amos 5:15, 24; James 2:9). Also, we do not see what evil really is, and that is what is in conflict to God's will. That is how evil is defined in the Bible, not just bad things happening.

But, why suffering, especially for my friend whose family is a victim of a vindictive, self-absorbed, sociopath attorney? I cannot give adequate comfort or arguments on why, only that God is sovereign and thus in control. I cannot presume to answer on His behalf, but I can tell you what is in His Word. It comes down to trust and faith in God, that His ways are best even though we may not be able to understand them (Isa. 55:8-9; Hab 2:4). Thus, God allows such suffering for a reason that we do not fully understand, especially when we are at the business end of a loss or of suffering.

Remember, God is still in control and by His sovereignty, He permits suffering and evil. However, at the same time, He keeps it under His control. He wins out; evil does not get off on a technicality, or an early pardon. Sin and evil will be judged (Psalm 1:5; 9:7; 94:15; 143:2; Eccl. 11:9; Isa. 16:5; Matt. 12:36; John 5:22; Romans 2:1-3; Romans 14:10 ; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:5 ; 1 Tim. 5:24 ; Heb. 9:27 ; James 2:13 ; James 4:11; 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Peter 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Rev. 20:12)! God is a God of mercy and a God that is Just. Evil will not go unpunished! At the same time, those who repent will be declared clean and innocent!

Another aspect most Christians and few secularists consider, as I previously stated, is that we are all evil by nature because we seek sin (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3)! This may not answer why a person loses a child, why a sister was raped, or why my friend is going through what he is going through. For these, I do not have answers, only the comfort, when I go through such situations,

that God is there, He is in control, He takes my sin, and reconciles me to Him in the mist of my misdeeds and the sin of others against me.

If God ended evil and its continuance, how would we grow and mature? Consider Joseph, an arrogant teen whose brothers betrayed him. He was sold into slavery, encountered dishonesty in the mist of his striving to be honest, and received betrayal in the mist of his diligence and honor. He lost his family and friends and was imprisoned in a foreign land with no hope for freedom or return to his loved ones. Yet, God used that for good (Gen 50:20; Rom. 5:3).

If, for the sake of argument, Joseph had never gone through what he went through, he would not have matured emotionally and spiritually. The famine would have hit and his family would have starved, as they would have had no place to go. But, Joseph did grow in character and maturity, and God used him to save his people from utter disaster. If Joseph had not gone through what he did, he would not have grown out of his arrogance. Arrogance cannot save people; it only elevates the self without merit. The greatest triumph of good versus evil is our Lord's victory on the cross! Thus, evil may not have been God's original plan, but it is what is partially used now to create the ultimate good (Rom. 8)!

We are not to seek suffering and evil so we can benefit from it! Rather, when it comes—and it will come—be prepared by faith, and handle it with diligence and faith, seeking our Lord's help, not your feelings and ideas (James 1:2-12). The result is how our God of grace and love weaves His plan of redemption through our sin and misplaced priorities to give us reconciliation, redemption, and hope. We can take comfort that we are not alone in the world or in suffering; God is there, carrying and equipping us through it. The question is *are we allowing His work in us or are we so focused on anger and bitterness that all we see is the situation?* If the latter is so, how will you grow and overcome?

The question of the problem of evil cannot be answered with secular reasoning, as it has no real meaning or hope. And, when we try, we just end up with empty rhetoric; of course, we should still try, as I am doing here. When we just focus on the “whys” of evil, we may miss what and why it is happening. Christ did conquer sin; we only have to receive His grace to take the victory. Yes, bad things will still happen to you and to me, but in the grand scheme, what we go through is of no comparison to what will come for us in eternity.

Our focus needs to be on Him, not situations, ideas, or complaints, for these do nothing to help us cope or get through; only He can give us the power to conquer (Rev. 21:4)! We can take comfort that one day, Christ will return and all things will be set right. In the meantime, we are to strive to keep ourselves away from evil and be diligent in keeping evil from affecting us. Evil does exist; of that, there is no doubt. It is trying to get in you and it is trying to get out (Matt. 25:25; Mark 8:38; Acts 1:11; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16-17; 2 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7; 51-f)!

### **How Do I Respond to Evil?**

The opposite of Evil is Goodness (Amos 5:15; Prov. 25:22; Matthew 7:12; 19:16; Luke 6:27, 35; Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 5:20; Galatians 5:22-23; Eph. 5:8-9; 1

Pet. 3:11; 2 Pet. 1:3-8). It is the engagement of love! It displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others and allows us to do the right thing. Goodness takes our virtue and excellence and models it to others in the action of love. It is doing the right thing even when it does not feel like we should. Joseph was betrayed and sold as a slave, yet he chose to make good of his situation and to help and treat others better than he needed to. Goodness is also the model for people to see Christ at work, so they will repent and accept Christ.

To be good, we have to have a renewed nature and mindset from our Lord. Jesus calls us to an entirely different perspective and outlook of life (Matt. 5:38-44). He sees the quintessential reason for life, and our being, in relationships. He wants us to transition our thinking from selfish and materialistic matters to eternal matters and relationships, which are far more valuable and important, as love is our motivation, and unselfishness is our goal.

Why are we to be good? Because God is good to us (Psalm 86:5; 145:4-13)! God has defeated evil, so why would any rational person seek failure unless he/she is as deluded as Satan is (Matt. 5:43-48; 25:41; John 12:31; 16:9-11; Col. 2:15; Rev. 20:1-3)! Because we are to serve a God of love and in so doing we are to love (1 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 4:7-21)! Goodness is the application of love, whereas pride is the love, and the only love we have and use and only for ourselves (Prov. 16:18; 29:23)! Being good will help us to be patient, kind, understanding, and forgiving to others. It will be the fruit that helps us build each other up, build His Church, reach His community, restore relationships, and seek the best in all we do. It is excellence in action! It is what builds great societies and its absence causes those same societies to collapse in debauchery!

In addition to goodness, we should be looking at the bigger picture of how we can learn from this, how we can build a relationship in this, how we can model Christ and build character through this. When we focus on the situation and not Christ, we will endure hardships and suffering for no reason; it will be meaningless. When all we do is seek revenge and become bitter over a situation, it will cause us to lose our freedom and be despondent. Freedom is also a choice; we should seek Christ and our freedom in His Grace and Mercy. Paul knew this even when he was in chains! Thus, whenever you are mistreated, take this challenge from our Lord. Seek ways to turn it around, to overcome evil with good, to turn unrighteousness into relationships! When we focus on Christ, we will succeed in growth, maturity, character, and the building of relationships. Revenge and resentment will only cause despair, stress, isolation, and broken relationships (1 Sam 24:8-15; 2 Kin 6: 8-23; Gen 45:4-15; Acts 7:59-60; Heb. 10:32-34; 1 Pet. 2:20-23)!

We are also to overcome evil with love by loving our enemies (Rom. 12:14-21)! If we follow Christ, we will gain enemies who will want to destroy us. We are called to do a difficult thing, one that is completely opposed to our fallen human thinking and culture—*not* to pay back evil for evil. Yet, this is our first thought when something bad happens. God even calls us to bless people who hate us! So, we have to find a way to retune our thinking to these challenging precepts of Scripture.



Our response to our enemy, both secular and apostate Christian, is to love them (we are not to love Satan!). If you are in a role of hate, the thing that hurts the most is someone coming to you in love! Conviction is very painful when we do not yield. Your revenge is to be love, for this has the greatest sting! And, it has the greatest positive effect. When we turn an enemy into a friend, we have won an incredible battle and prevented future war. We are to turn strife into an incredible blessing! God will allow your enemies to teach you, as an enemy may know you better than you know yourself. Thus, go to school through their attacks. Learn and grow in Christ. Let God be the judge! He is God and knows the true motivations and circumstances of people to which we do not have access. Thus, He will judge with the right amount of vengeance. Our vengeance is insignificant, unnecessary, and unlawful before God! Let God be God.

Although our hope is in eternity and this earth is our temporary home, we are still to do our best while we are here (1 Pet. 2:11). We are to be *peacemakers*. There are times when Christians must take a stand to defend morality, such as the anti-abortion movement. This must always be done in love, in listening, and in kindness, while never compromising integrity or values. There are also times when we must go to war, either for defense or to defend others. This is not a rejection of the sixth commandment of, "you shall not murder." Rather, it is the protection and responsibility to the government, which, if followed biblically, is moral and just. We must not have a desire to use revenge in order to "get even." (Duet. 32:35; Prov. 25: 21-22) As our Chinese friends say, "You better first dig two graves before seeking revenge." Jesus calls us to do the opposite of our feelings and the ways of the world. He said to love them back instead of seeking revenge and payback (Luke 6:32-33). Then, Jesus continually warns us of persecution (Matt. 5:10-12; 10:16-32; 24:9-13). We are to love them in all the characters of love (1 Cor. 13: 4-8). Real love is measured by what it costs us, not what we get from it! We are to bless them; this is also a form of love that shows kindness and self-giving from the teachings, examples, character of, and ways that Jesus acted toward those who persecuted Him. We are to pray *for* them, not *about* them. This means we do not pray that God gets them back, rather that He changes their hearts toward Him and His perfect will. This was going further than the most pious O.T. saints did (2 Chron. 24:22; Psalm 137: 7-9; Jer. 11:20; 15:15; 17:18; 18:23). Proverbs 25:21-22 tells us that when we overcome evil with good, it totally disorients those who hurt us, sending them into chaos and confusion until they are convicted or fall deeper into sin and death. This should give us a wake-up call that this is the best revenge; let their own misdeeds haunt them, and let the perfect Judge deal with them!

If you are not caring for others outside of your circle, then pride is in the way of His Way and evil is on its way to you and from you! Your life is a false dedication to things that are not centered upon His will. We cannot earn our way, but our way must reflect His work (Rom. 6:12; Eph. 5:15-17; Col. 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:24)!

*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Rev. 21:4).*

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## ***Definition of Sins!***

### **What is sin and what does it do?**

#### **Romans 1:18-32**

**General Idea:** The laundry list of sins is found in Romans 1:28-31. The passage starts off with the reason we get into sin, the *reprobate mind* that chooses to rebel and exchange God's wonderful truth for the cheap lies of our mind and flesh. Thus, God burns with anger, just as a loving parent gets angry when his child disobeys. This is especially evident when the child is in danger, the parent knows it, and the child refuses to acknowledge, listen, or change his mind and ways. If God did not care or love, why would He be angry?

God is not some kind of killjoy who has a perverse sense of humor, desiring to see us suffer. He does not just come up with a list of rules and regulations that we could not possibly follow just to amuse Himself. No, God is pure, just, and loving. We, as humans, chose to fall away from God and His perfection. God desires us to live the best way possible, and experience the most out of life with happiness and joy.

Yet, we live in a world corrupted by sin, so everything is degraded from what it was meant to do. Man, the land, animals, plants, the air, everything is touched. Thus, the consequences of that fallen nature impact everything. Even in this corrupted, tainted world, including our sinful selves, we have a God who is offering His love and grace, if only we will reach out and respond. However, we cannot, so His Son, the Christ lived, as we should have. In our place, He took our sins to the grave, and arose to give us eternal hope and life. Even with the grace option offered to us, which is written upon our hearts, we still choose to rebel. We choose to take His wonder, love, and truth, and trade it in for lies. We desire to suppress His truth and love, and when it all falls apart, we blame God and others, refusing to take the responsibility for ourselves! We have no excuse! His revelation is clear; it is filled with our best in mind, and powered by His desire to see us saved. Let us turn from our evil ways, lest we end up *given up to our desires* that will be fun for a short while, but will lead to everlasting regret and torment. It is like a parent letting his kid eat all he wants in a candy store until it makes him sick, times a thousand. With sin, we have the choice to realize it makes us sick, thus, it is meaningless. Therefore, we can stop, or keep at it until it kills us. Remember, we do not deserve His love and grace, yet He gives it to us anyway.

**The laundry list of sins:** (From the Greek words as they appear in their English forms in the KJV, NKJV and NIV)

**Verse 28:** The Theme is pagan activities. We must be willing to look to God, He is worthwhile for us to know and follow in faith and in practice. If not, our lives and relationships will have dire consequences. Who are the models and heroes we look up too will say a lot of who we are and who we want to be! As the Greek and Roman god's in the myth stories were petty and often behaved as amoral or immoral beings who were mean and connived with no regard to truth or consequence. As people worshiped them, they too would act as they did; the god's were the examples of people's wicked behaviors. Paul's point is, do not act as the pagans did or their corrupt god's, but act as Christ modeled for us to act.

- ***Reprobate, debased, or depraved mind:*** This means being a degenerate, which is just "plain ole' good-for-nothing" to God or to those around them. It is the direct opposite of being pure and holy. The "heathen" is a term from the Greek to *exchange a truth for a lie* and means people who are vile and so corrupted they have no hope. It means people who refuse to believe or bow to God, even though they do, in fact, know who God is. It is written in their hearts and revealed by creation, but they do not wish to uphold that knowledge of who God is, and who they are NOT, which is, God. Consequently, God also gave them up to sin. It represents a mind that is blinded by pride and arrogance, so they choose not to recognize the difference between their will and what God reveals, or between their presumptions and the facts. This is why there are so many opinions by individuals and even in science, which is supposed to be fact! This is the effect of the separation from God because of the Fall, and their punishment is to "let them be." This passage clearly demonstrates that all that remains of morality and virtue between God and humanity is the Holy Spirit, who restrains and sets boundaries. Still, our choices prevailing will produce consequences, and will accumulate with us as well as all those around us. When God gives people up, the Holy Spirit will even force their perversity, just as God did with Pharaoh, to make a point for others as a sign post: Do not sin!
- ***Not convenient, not fitting, or ought not to be done:*** This is the "my will or else" mentality! This word means what is suitable to the nature of humanity as a rational and moral being (secular humanism). "I will not move my will!" "Do not bother me with the facts, for I have already made up my mind," or "I will not submit to man or God!" To do things that are not convenient is not allowing anyone or anything to upset my comfort zone, such as anything contrary and opposite to my thinking, even in the light of logic and reason.

**Verse 29:** *If our view of God and His character is distorted, so will the virtue and morality in which we engage in. How we see God will dramatically influence how*

*we live our lives. The character to which we look too in others will be the character in which we conduct ourselves to others.*

- **Being filled:** This means that the sin(s) are uncontrolled and are dwelling in the heart and mind so there is no room for anything else, such as “good.” This mentality then overflows to everyone else (peer pressure, dares, thinking solely what’s good for me, extreme excess and my pleasures, and how can I infect others).
- **Unrighteousness, or every kind of wickedness:** This word in the original Greek implies injustice, but not just injustice. It is often used for general wickedness and disorder (1:18). This is a general word, which sets a tone to include all the various sins that follow in this laundry list such as **evil, greed, envy, depravity, strife, deceit, and malice** (NIV). However, in the context of this passage, it indicates judicial injustice. This was the popular crime of the Roman government, who built their empire on jealousy and pride.
- **Fornication, or sexual immorality:** (this is one of the few places that the NIV translation messes up and omits this word *Fornication* - a key sin! The publisher’s response to why it is omitted is because it is interned (assumed) to be tied with the term **every kind of wickedness.**) This is any kind of sexual function outside of a husband and wife. The world sees this as “un-blamable,” an obsession to be freely and universally allowed and practiced. Today we make excuses saying it is genetics and in the ancient world creative excuses were fathomed too, “I was made that way.” I guess the genetics excuse is nothing new! This is the violation of the seventh commandment.
- **Wickedness:** This refers to the general inclination to do evil and be happy and glad in it. This person will take enjoyment from the cruel and nasty actions they do to others. They seek to destroy what is good and what would last, from buildings, to people, to God Himself if they were able.
- **Covetousness:** The Greek word strictly signifies *taking advantage of a situation* is the motive for evil’s sake. It can be going too far in bargaining in a market to having more than what is just in any dealings with others. This is common from rich to poor, taking advantage, not seeking to get a good deal. Taken too far, it hurts and takes advantage of the weaker, less fortunate person.
- **Maliciousness, or Malice** represents the character of malice, which is to injure others out of spite, meanness, or revenge.
- **Full of envy** is the usual vice of the villages, towns, and cities of the ancient world and is alive and well today. It is jealousy in action and the desire to take what is not ours from others (the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment!).

- **Murder** is nothing new. In this context, it mainly refers not just to murder in general, but how slave owners treated their slaves, as they were put to death for the slightest of offenses. Now it is how we treat others. Murder is the viperous offence in our treatment to others!
- **Debate, or strife:** This is not the debate of a good challenge of logic or rhetoric, but how we use words for vainglory, to deliberately slander, malign, and not to seek the truth.
- **Deceit** is dishonest treachery that embodies our conduct and conversations (Romans 3:13).
- **Malignity, or evil-minded** means slander, as custom or disposition. It is the desire to hurt others without any other reason other than to get pleasure from doing evil to others, and causing their sufferings in the worst sense.
- **Whisperer or gossip** signifies people who secretly speak evil of others when they are present: **GOSSIP!** This evil is in the same category as murder and sexual immorality, so take heed of this! It is called whispering, not because of the tone of the voice, but from the secrecy that gossip breeds. It refers to sowing divisions, injury, calamity, and slander. The whisperer thinks because their voice is low and the person cannot defend himself, they escape prosecution and harm. Wrong!

**Verse 30:** If we have a faulty concept of God, we will have faulty relationships and be engaged in heinous sins! Be aware, God will allow us to dam ourselves! This is called “Penal Blindness,” the natural consequences of sin, just as a sharp knife can be used to prepare food as it can be used to harm, the user chooses how it is to be used. Never forget personal responsibility and that God is just in His wrath against sin (Psalm 81:12; Isa. 6:9-11; 29:9-12; Jer. 44:25-27).

- **Backbiters/ slanderers (revilers):** The original word is improperly translated in the NKJV into *backbiters*. Its proper translation, according to Greek dictionaries and in context is “revilers,” distinguishing it from whisperers/gossipers, as these people speak evil of others to their face (not their back). Backbiters also meant open slandering in the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the KJV, whereas today it means in secret. It means making slanderous remarks publicly with opprobrious language and name-calling. The word can include evil speaking in general. This also means people who take pleasure in scandalizing others and seeking to cause divisions and chaos as speakers of evil, speaking nothing but lies. The word “whisperers” refers to a secret, and the word *backbiters* or *slanderers*, to an open slander.
- **Haters of God:** People seeking to blame their self-made problems on God, and deny any kind of personal responsibility or accepting the providence of

God. Superstition can also play a big role here, as with refusing to acknowledge God's sovereignty. This also applies to a carnal mind that is hostile against God, His holiness, His justice, His sovereignty, and even His mercy and grace. This was quickly put into practice by governing offices under the influence of the philosophers and the whole body of the Roman and Jewish people. It included rich and poor, educated and uneducated to produce the persecutions of the early Christians. The Christian character of goodness is the direct opposite of a world of God haters.

- ***Despiteful, violent, or insolent:*** These terms do not express the full meaning of the Greek. We can translate them as injurious, as being so prideful, so filled with contempt, and so judgmental they are causing injury to others with extreme impertinence and insult. It is tearing others down by slanderous, abusive, passionate statements.
- ***Proud, or arrogant*** refers to feeling they are better than anyone else to an extreme, such as the Nazis' persecution of anyone different from them. This happens when people are so puffed up with a high opinion of themselves they become consumed with arrogance, insolence, haughtiness, and regarding others with contempt, as if they were unworthy of any contact with them.
- ***Boasters, or arrogant*** designates pretentious and flamboyant people who extend their self-image and self-determination over and against anyone or anything.
- ***Inventors of evil things*** is the creative thinking and inventing of evil, then conspiring to do it with accomplices and causing others not with them to stumble into such illicit pleasures.
- ***Disobedient to parents*** may seem benign, but when we forsake good instruction, we embark upon a path of self-destruction. In OT times, obedience to parents was considered a duty, taught by the Torah, and is the fifth commandment. Thus, is very important. Too many people take it too lightly then they fall into sin and other harm. When people disregarded this responsibility, they will leave the God induced love of children for their parents, and follow lies and malice.

**Verse 31:** These sins in Paul's time were not controversial in their definition or scope, as they were considered bad and reprehensible by educated Greeks and pious Jews. However, they were rarely condemned and often tolerated as the "just" looked the other way.

- ***Without understanding, undiscerning, or senseless*** refers to the reckless management of our life and affairs. This will cause long-term consequences to us as well as those around us! It does not mean people are stupid or have some kind of developmental disorder, but is refusing to yield to logic, reason,

and what is best for our situation and for us. It also applies to the highly educated who are the most intelligent and enlightened in society; yet, reject the things and character of God or anything that respects the things of God.

- **Covenant-breakers or untrustworthy or faithless** refers to breaking of agreements and covenants. It applies to every agreement or bargain one makes, from business, to individual relationships, to contracts between nations.
- **Without natural attention, or unloving, or heartless:** It seems Paul has the Stoic philosophy in mind. This applies to parents neglecting their children, causing them to be in harm or the potential of harm. The Stoics were famous for being unconcerned and uncaring, letting people find their own ways, doing as they pleased and having no regrets or emotions to others. *If you see a child that is hungry, let him starve.* This of course is the opposite of Biblical instruction, yet the practice of many people.
- **Implacable, unforgiving, or ruthless** signify people who are callous and are relentlessly savage and hardhearted in their dealing with others, and who break solemn engagements. These people will breach the most sacred of engagements, such as oaths and religious rites, including marriage. In Paul's time, this applied to mostly to the rudest and most uncivilized barbaric nations who violated treaties.
- **Unmerciful** usually refers to those who are unmerciful to the poor. However, it also means people, who are without compassion, who do not feel for the distresses of others and those who cause these distresses.

**Verse 32:** Sin then as it is today is measured by its popularity. The more people doing it, means I can feel it is OK and thus rationalize that it is OK that I do it too. This illogical reasoning ignores truth and responsibility, no matter how many people you see or know who engage in sin, the sin's impact and significance remains the same as our consequence and God's condemnation of it.

- **Knowing the judgment or righteousness of God:** This chapter already tells us that God's ordinances are written in our hearts and in creation; thus, we have no excuse to reject Him, even if the gospel is never told to us! The heathens already knew, yet they chose to subdue themselves from God's most precious love and grace. This also implies that God's dictates are written in our conscience, from how to know Him to how to conduct our lives. At the same time, we have to be careful. If you are not a Christian, your conscience will not be reliable as your will forces and overpowers its way and noise over God's righteousness unless you listen. In addition, your conscience, your sense of right and wrong, is like a computer. God installs its operating system. Yet, you can still send in corrupt programming and get

corrupt thinking. Only prayer and the Word will install good programming. Garbage in will equal garbage out!

- **Worthy or deserving of death** is what most scholars say is literal or figurative death because it is referring to future punishment and whether Paul is accusing all heathens, or if they are actually committing the sin, or just capable of committing the sin. This gets complicated in the Greek, but, nonetheless, if one persists in sinning, the sin itself can kill. Just look at all of the deadly communicable diseases, not to mention other perils sin causes. In addition, there is the final death of our separation from God in eternity, which is Hell, for rejecting Him.
- **Not only do the same, but have pleasure or approve in them that do** means that their corruption has become so entrenched, so entirely abandoned to sin, that they will conspire to push others into it also. They will approve and support others in their sin. Just look at all of the special interest groups propagating sin, such as Planned Parenthood, ACLU, NOW, and pro-gay groups, to name a few. They group tightly together, and rationalize and approve such things as abortion or homosexual sin as good and beneficial! They hate those who are just and righteous!

In summary Paul substantiates his charge in Romans 1:18 of immorality in the world that Jew, Gentile, nor anyone else is immune from. He starts out with **ungodliness** as the beginning and cause of sin, after which it turns into **unrighteousness**, which becomes the consequence that causes the evil against others. Theological decay will turn into moral decay. When we lose sight of God, we venture into all kinds of heinous actions and corruptions. This is what brings on the wrath of God, because it hurts too many of His children, whom He loves (Titus 2:12).

As we can see from this passage, nothing can be more horrifying than what happens when we venture into unrepentant continual sin and conspire others into it. This is clearly given to us by the Holy Spirit, who is very familiar with our sinful nature, our superficial actions, and our covert motives. We cannot see this as an exaggeration nor conclude these are just things that are caused by genetics or our environment. They do contribute, but we still have the final say with our actions! We may not be able to control our environment, but we can control our attitudes, behaviors, and choices! Rather, we choose these things freely and first, before we choose God. Thus, justification by works is impossible. Our only means to God is by His grace alone, by what Christ did for us!

Did you notice that sin is disorderly, reckless, seeks to destroy, and is hard to point out because people do not want to be reminded they have it. They are too busy using it! God's revelation is clear; it is filled with our best in mind, powered by His Love and desire to see us saved. Let us turn from our evil ways, lest we end up *given up to our desires* that may be "fun" for a short while, but



then brings everlasting regret and torment. (More lists of sin: Mark 7:20-23; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:2-5)

**Questions:**

1. When you do your laundry, you take your dirty clothes and wash them clean. How well do you like to wear dirty clothes? How much more do you prefer your clothes clean? How is this like sin?
2. Did you ever have a period in your life where you went wild, like college youth on spring break? If so, did you ever see God as a “killjoy” to your fun? Why?
3. Can you think of any good excuses to sin? Why, or why not?
4. Why do some people see God as one who gives us rules because He has a perverse sense of humor and desires to see us suffer?
5. Did you see any of your faults/sins listed? If so, how did you feel?
6. Were there any surprise sins that you never considered heinous?
7. What is the reason we get into sin?
8. Have you ever considered that God’s wrath is a form of love? If God did not care, or did not love us, why would He be angry?
9. We live in a world totally corrupted by sin. Why then are most people unable to see it?
10. What is Christ’s role in dealing with our sin?
11. Why would people choose to take His wonder, love, and truth and trade it for lies?
12. Go through each of this laundry list of sins and ask yourself:
  1. Have I done this? If so, how, and why?
  2. Can I see myself doing this? If so, what would cause me to?
  3. What can I do to prevent such thoughts and actions from encroaching upon me?

Remember we do not deserve His love and grace, yet it is given to us anyway.

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**Extra Insights:**

**Trick or Treat? *By Richard Krejcir***

**The old devil has many *Tricks*.**

**He says, “Don’t believe in God.”**

But the Bible says, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”” Psalms 14:1.

**He says, “Wait until later to become a Christian.”**

But the Bible says, “Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation” 2 Corinthians 6:2.

**He says, “Christians can’t have any fun.”**

But the Bible says, “I (Christ) have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” John 10:10

**He says, ”All good roads lead to Heaven.”**

But the Bible says, “I (Christ) am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” John 14:6

**He says, “God is too good to send anyone to hell.”**

But the Bible says, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:18

**He says, “you are good enough without being a Christian.”**

**But, has he pulled a trick on you?**

**The Lord God has many *Treats*.**

**God gives faith.**

The Bible says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of god” Ephesians 2:8.

**God gives peace.**

The Bible says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" Romans 5:1.

### **God gives joy.**

The Bible says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more" Psalm 16:11.

### **God gives love.**

The Bible says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" 1John 4:7.

### **God gives gifts.**

The Bible says, "Every good gift and ever perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" James 1:17.

### **God gives eternal life.**

The Bible says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" John 1:12.

### **Will you take God's free gift?**

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### **A Sinners Excuse!** By Richard Krejcir

1. I'm OK because I am a good person.

You may think that way but God does not!

*Rom: 3:23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

*Rom: 3:10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

*Eccl: 7:20: For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

Not only does God show that you are a sinner, but He also warns you of the consequences of sin, and the judgment that follows.

*Rom: 6:23: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Ezek: 18:4: Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

*Num. 32:23: Be sure your sin will find you out.*

## 2. I'm too big a sinner to be a Christian

The fact is we all are! As a sinner we are saved because what Christ has done. He came to save us sinners, and if you relinquish your sins and trust and obey the Lord Jesus, you have God's word He will forgive you!

*1Tm: 1:15: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

*Lk: 19:10: For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

*Isa: 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*Prov: 28:13: He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

*Rom: 10:13: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

*Jn: 6:37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

*Heb: 7:25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

If you are among the "uttermost" ones, come now and rejoice in your salvation!

## 3. Not now! I'm just not ready yet.

*Lk: 14:17: Come; for all things are now ready.*

*Heb: 3:15: While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

*Isa: 55:6: Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:*

*2Cor: 6:2: (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

*Prov: 27:1: Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

*Jms: 4:13: Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:*

*Lk: 12:19-20: And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

*Mt: 25:13: Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

Are you ready, if not what is in the way?

4. There is too much to give up.

*Mk: 8:36: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

*Ps: 84:11: For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

*Rom: 8:32: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

*Mt: 6:33: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Lk: 18:29: And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30: Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

*Rom: 6:23: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

What we may give up in no way compares to what we gain in Him!

**A Thought about sin, you can use for preaching:**

**Sammy's Big Catch**

Sammy was a good-looking young boy who lived in the deep south. His summer days were filled with times of walking through the woods, playing with friends, and fishing in the pond down the dirt road. Fishing was by far his favorite thing to do. Just about every day during his summer vacation, he would dig up some worms and head off, pole in hand, for a day of fishing.

This steamy hot day was like most others during Sammy's summer break. Waking early, he could hear the pond calling him to come fish. Sammy quietly walked out the front door, grabbed his pitchfork and worm pail from the porch, and walked into the woods to search for bait. He turned over old stumps and dug under leaves hoping to find worms. Under one old stump he hit the jackpot. The ground was writhing. In two minutes he had all the bait he needed, and in 15 minutes he was at the pond.

Reaching into his bait bucket, Sammy pulled out a big worm. He double hooked it and tossed it into the water. He noticed a stinging in his hand, but filled with the excitement of the moment, he paid no attention to it. Within 30 seconds, Sammy had a strike and pulled in a nice catfish. Wow, he thought, a fish in the first minute. This is unbelievable!

He put the catch on his stringer, hurried to rebait his hook, and tried his luck again. Once again he felt a stinging sensation in his hand as he threw his hook into the pond. He didn't have time to worry about it. Within just a few seconds, he had another huge fish. He fumbled the next time he baited his hook-his hand felt numb and stiff. But Sammy was too excited about catching another fish to give it much thought.

At the end of only an hour of fishing, Sammy had caught eight large fish. This was definitely his best fishing day ever. He was so proud of his accomplishment that, even though there was plenty of day left to fish, he threw the heavy stringer of fish over his shoulder and dashed down the dirt road toward home to show off his catch to his mom and dad.

The local sheriff happened to drive up alongside Sammy and started to congratulate him on his catch of fish. With a smile and a victory whoop, Sammy held up the stringer. The sheriff gasped, parked his car and strode over to Sammy. His eyes hadn't deceived him-Sammy's arms really were red and swollen to about twice their normal size. Exactly where have you been and what

bait did you use to catch all those fish?" The sheriff asked Sammy, already guessing the answer.

I found some special bait under an old stump," Sammy boasted. "These worms really wiggle good," he commented, handing up the bait bucket for inspection. After a close look at the worms, the sheriff went into fast-forward. Securing the bucket in his truck, he then scooped Sammy and his stringer of fish into the backseat of his patrol car. Spinning a U-turn on the gravel road, he sped off to the hospital, but Sammy was already dead.

What the sheriff had discovered was that Sammy had been fishing with baby rattlesnakes. Sammy's deadly bait brought him a good morning's fishing but cost him his life. Had Sammy stopped fishing after that first sting, he could have been saved. One bite from a baby rattler won't kill a person who gets treatment in time. But Sammy was having fun and didn't bother himself with the small voice of pain in his hand.

Then, as his hand grew numb, even that small voice was silenced. Playing around with sin is like using baby rattlesnakes for bait. Sinning seems harmless to young people who don't recognize sin and are unaware of its deadly consequences. The more sin you get into, however, the more numb you become to its sting. In the excitement of the moment, you ignore the still small voice of God warning you of danger and encouraging you to choose life instead of death.

(Story from: Jeannette Vega)

For more articles Check out our Spiritual Warfare Channel: Our purpose here is to unwrap the Biblical understanding of Evil, Satan, Demons and Spiritual Warfare. With so much misunderstanding on this subject, we feel we need to go to the Main Source, God's Word!

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