

# **The Character of God and the Gospel Glossary**

**Second Edition**

Detailed word studies helping to determine the Biblical meaning of dozens of words/terms that have a bearing on correctly understanding both the character of God and the gospel itself.

# **The Character of God and the Gospel Glossary**

Second edition  
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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the members of our weekly study group who have helped so much to bring out the deeper meanings as we have studied these words together. Also, and especially, to our amazing God Who knew we would change and confuse word meanings and so built into His Word a system allowing the Bible to define its own terms.

# The Character of God and the Gospel Glossary

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(\* indicates a supplemental term)

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(\*indicates a supplemental term, not actually appearing in the KJV Bible)

#### **Words/terms to be added in future editions:**

brimstone, converted, covenants, destroying angel, dispensation, faith,  
imparted/imputed, omniscience, salvation, tithe, trust, worship and probably more.

For the most up-to-date list, visit: <https://characterofgod.org/character-god-gospel-glossary/>

# The Character of God

The necessity for this glossary came out of much study of the topic of the character of God. One does not need to look at that topic for long before realizing that many words have been mistranslated, many are not understood in a manner consistent with how the Bible itself uses them (as determined from context), word meanings have changed over time, tradition, idioms and figures of speech and other issues have obscured the original meaning.

Another issue is the fact that Hebrew is a language with relatively few words such that most words are translated in a great variety of ways. You can find in the Strong's Concordance examples of Hebrew words translated into many different English words. For example, the Hebrew word "dabar" which is translated as "commandments" in Exodus 34:28 is translated into over 50 different English words in the KJV. For many reasons, God's character has been misunderstood and taught incorrectly, leading many to turn away from Him.

God, in the Old Testament, is often portrayed as watching our every move and recording every sin making sure that each receives its due punishment. Yet, God's Son, Jesus, came specifically to show the character of His Father. He said to His disciple Philip:

"... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ..." (John 14:9)

Of course, they had not literally seen the Father but they had seen, over the years they spent with Jesus, a picture of what the Father is really like.

We have clues from various verses that the common understanding of God's character might not be right. Here are just a few examples:

"... thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself ..." (Psalm 50:21)  
 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 55:8)

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)

Is it very clear that misunderstanding of what God is really like, even among professed Christians (and the reflection of that understanding in their characters) has caused many to reject Christianity altogether.

It is the hope of the author of this glossary that it will prove to be a useful tool for those who are interested in a deeper understanding of God. For each term, a brief definition is given according to the common understanding (the **Traditional Legal Model**) of God's character and His gospel. Those are each paired with a definition according to what is termed the **Biblical Healing Model**. For each term, a detailed word study is also presented to provide the Biblical background for the definition.

## Two Gospel Models Compared

The character of God and the gospel itself can be understood through two lenses or from two models. It can be difficult to make what amounts to a paradigm shift from one to the other because there are so many terms involved. However, once a person grasps that there is another way to view the character of God and the gospel, motivation in regard to God totally changes from fear of Him (which may even be unconscious - "if I don't make it, I will burn") to one of total love and appreciation for an ever-merciful, freely-forgiving God of love Who is much more concerned for our happiness than His own.

Read the descriptions below for each model for a better understanding of the differences between the models. Words included in or to be added to the glossary are in **bold** print.

### The Traditional Legal Model

God **arbitrarily imposed laws** and determined **punishments** for violations which are called **sins**. Since He is a God of **justice**, evil stirs up His **wrath** which must be **appeased** by a **sacrifice** including the shedding of **blood**. Those who finally reject **mercy** come under the **awful curse** of God Who will finally take **vengeance** by **smiting sinners** with **fire** from heaven – the **second death**.

A **sinner** whose **guilty conscience** brings conviction for his sinfulness can confess and be granted **forgiveness** because the **ransom price** has been provided to **legally** cancel the debt. The **propitiation** brings **atonement** for sins which are then **blotted** from the **record books** of heaven. The **repentant sinner**, by **faith**, is **justified** and declared to be **righteous**. Having received **salvation**, he grows in **sanctification** towards **perfection** and, in the final investigative **judgment**, will not come under **condemnation**.

### The Biblical Healing Model

God designed **laws** as the basis of life, violations of which have **intrinsic, natural consequences** leading towards death. Those who rebel against His law of **love** will exhibit that rebellion in unrighteous acts – **sins**. This state of **sinfulness** causes **condemnation** in the **conscience** and has **punishment** built into it. When a person persists in rejection of and distrust of God, God honors that **free-will** choice and, in **wrath**, leaves the **sinner** to the **consequences** of his choices.

If **guilt** brings **conviction** enough to cause a sinner to choose **repentance**, he will receive **forgiveness** which has already been freely granted by God to all. A realization of the grace and **glory** (character) of God to provide **salvation** leads the sinner to **trust** (have faith in) God; to be **justified** or set right with Him. The Bible calls this **atonement** – the condition of being “at-one” with God. The repentant sinner then, as He beholds the **righteousness** of Christ, grows in **sanctification** towards **perfection** of character. Christ’s life (typified by His **blood**) and **sacrifice** frees (**ransoms**) us from what held us captive – the lies of Satan about the character of God and our own **sinful natures**.

# Introduction to the Glossary

This glossary consists of definitions and detailed word studies to back up those definitions. Why so many words? It may seem very challenging to have to rethink the meaning of dozens of terms but that is not God's fault. The problem is that man has changed the understanding in varying degrees with the result that there is great confusion today about the true character of God. Even the gospel itself is poorly understood by the vast majority of Christians.

The result of correctly understanding and applying word meanings as the Bible itself defines them is a better understanding of what God is really like. By doing that we get a different picture of the gospel - what is called **The Biblical Healing Model** which focuses very much on healing our relationship with our loving heavenly Father. This is a more accurate way of understanding Him than **The Traditional Legal Model** which presents Him more as an authoritative figure keeping track of our sins and making sure each one is paid for. See the previous page for a comparison of the two models.

This glossary attempts to better define terms by:

- Comparing scripture with scripture
- Looking at the meanings of the original Hebrew and Greek words
- Examining the context of many verses using a term to help determine the meaning
- Considering word meanings in the context of what all of scripture says about God
- Being aware of the use of idioms and figures of speech
- Consulting numerous Bible versions
- Consulting commentaries and dictionaries. Especially, use has been made of Webster's 1828 dictionary which is almost 200 years closer to when the KJV was written.

## Notes

- This glossary is a work in progress and further words/terms will be added and minor changes made as needed in future editions. This 2023 edition includes revisions since the first (January 2022) edition. The most recent information will be available at: <https://characterofgod.org/character-god-gospel-glossary/>
- Notice of new editions, newsletters and new pages posted at <https://characterofgod.org/> can be obtained by registering at: <https://characterofgod.org/newsletter-form/>
- Links within the definitions have been spelled out in full for use from a printed version.
- Supplemental terms that are important for understanding but not actually appearing in the Bible (KJV) are included.

**To understand the message, you need to know the meaning of the words it uses.**



# Accuser

The accuser of the brethren. The meaning of "accuser" is one who charges another with (in the spiritual context) a sin. In this study, we will look at who "the accuser of the brethren" is and whether God is ever an accuser.

**Traditional Legal Model** - While Satan is called "the accuser," God also keeps records of sins, judges and executes the sentence and therefore His heavenly justice system must also include accusing and laying charges.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Satan alone is the accuser. God has no part in accusing. He does not keep a record of charges against us for the purpose of administering punishment. In fact, He is always on our side doing all He can to clear us of Satan's accusations.

Anytime God points out sin He does it as gently as possible and only for the purpose of bringing to repentance; never to condemn or punish.

## What does it Mean to Accuse?

### Modern Dictionary

#### Accuse (verb)

1. to charge with the fault, offense, or crime (usually followed by of): He accused him of murder.
  2. to find fault with; blame.
- (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/accuse>)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

#### Accuse (verb transitive)

1. To charge with, or declare to have committed a crime, either by plaint, or complaint, information, indictment, or impeachment; to charge with an offense against the laws, judicially or by a public process; as, to *accuse* one of a high crime or misdemeanor.
  2. To charge with a fault; to blame.
- (<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/accuse>)

Any accusation, in a legal sense, has to be relative to the breaking of laws.

## Who is the Accuser of the Brethren?

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and **Satan**, which deceiveth the whole world: he was **cast out** into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the **accuser of**



**our brethren** is **cast down**, which **accused** them before our God day and night." (Rev 12:9-10)

In the context, this is clearly showing Satan to be the accuser.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Pet 5:8)

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Eph 6:16)

## "Satan" and "Accuser" are Related Words

**H7853** שָׂטָן *satan saw-tan'* a primitive root; v;

AV-adversary 5, resist 1; 6

1) (Qal) to be or act as an adversary, resist, oppose

**H7854** שָׂטָן *satan saw-tawn'*

from **07853**, Greek **4566** σαταν; n m;

AV-Satan 19, adversary 7, withstand 1; 27

1) adversary, one who withstands

1a) adversary (in general-personal or national)

2) superhuman adversary

2a) Satan (as noun pr)

An adversary, one who opposes another, would certainly be expected to accuse. There is a similar relation among Greek words:

"And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused (G1225) unto him that he had wasted his goods." (Luke 16:1)

**G1225** διαβάλλω *diaballo*

from **1223** and **906**; v;

AV-accuse 1; 1

1) to throw over or across, to send over

2) to traduce, calumniate, slander, **accuse**, defame

**G1228** διάβολος *diabolos*

from **1225**; adj;

AV-devil 35, false accuser 2, slanderer 1; 38

1) prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely

1a) a calumniator, false accuser, slanderer,

2) metaph. applied to a man who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or to side with him

## Who Does Satan Accuse?

Satan especially accuses God's people:

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the **accuser of our brethren** is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev 12:10)

In the Garden of Eden, he indirectly accused God of lying by misquoting Him and of being selfish in holding knowledge back from Adam and Eve:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ... And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:1, 4-5)

Satan accused God in the story of Job of essentially buying Job's worship:

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." (Job 1:9-10)

He accused Joshua the high priest:

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." (Zech 3:1)

"That is, to be his accuser, as he is called Revelation 12:10. 'So here he is represented as aggravating the faults of Joshua, the representative of the whole body of the Jews, (see Zechariah 3:2,) by this means to prevail with God to continue the Jews under the power of their adversaries. It was the custom in courts of judicature, for the accuser to stand at the right hand of the accused.'" (Benson Commentary on Zechariah 3:1)

## Does God Ever Accuse?

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

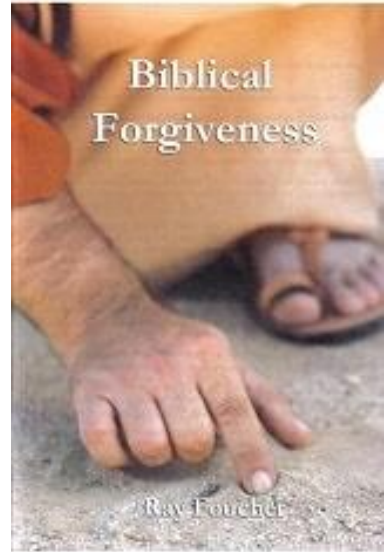
Many versions say "Who shall accuse ..." or "Who will bring any charge ..." God does not do that. His efforts are much more to justify - to set us right with Him and avoid anything that might drive us further from Him.

There are a number of examples in scripture where God could have accused but did not.

### The Woman Caught in Adultery

He did not condemn or accuse the woman caught in adultery:

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine **accusers**? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee**: go, and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)



He did not even accuse those who unjustly brought her to Him but, rather, the common understanding is that He wrote their sins in the sand - the standard in stone (indicating permanence), the sins in sand (indicating God's forgiveness). See my booklet (pictured above) and available here: (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#biblical-forgiveness>)

"This they said, tempting him, **that they might have to accuse him**. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*." (John 8:6)

The result was self-conviction:

"And they which heard it, being **convicted by their own conscience**, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." (John 8:9)

### The Devil

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, **durst not bring against him a railing accusation**, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 1:9)

## Simon the Pharisee

When Simon was unjustly accusing the woman washing the Savior's feet. Jesus did not openly expose him for his hypocrisy but told a parable to get the point across. Read it and the result in Luke 7:40-47.

## King David

God, through the prophet Nathan, brought conviction to King David of his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah not by accusation but by using a parable (2 Sam 12:1-7).

## Accuse or Plead?

Here is an interesting verse:

"He [the LORD] will not always **chide** (H7378): neither will he keep *his anger* for ever."  
(Psa 103:9)

Interesting because the word "chide," in many other versions, is rendered as "accuse."

"He will not constantly **accuse** us, nor remain angry forever." (Psa 103:9, New Living Translation)

"The LORD won't always be angry and **point out our sins**;" (Psa 103:9, Contemporary English Version)

Yet the original Hebrew word is most often translated as to "plead" which sounds more helpful than to "accuse." Pleading in the sense of trying to get us on His side; much different than accusing!

### H7378 reeb

a primitive root; v;

AV-**plead** 27, strive 13, contend 12, chide 6, debate 2, misc 7; 67

1) to strive, contend

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to strive

1a1a) physically

1a1b) with words

1a2) to conduct a case or suit (legal), sue

1a3) to make complaint

1a4) to quarrel

## What About Our Conscience?

We can come under conviction of sin because of our conscience. But God even gives us the option to turn it off - ignore it long enough and the "voice" becomes inaudible. Notice the parallel within this verse:

"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and **their thoughts** the mean while **accusing** or else excusing one another;)"  
(Romans 2:15)

- their **conscience** also **bearing witness**
- their **thoughts** the mean while **accusing** or else excusing

Our conscience can accuse us when we have done wrong but that is a good thing. We can still do something about it. We can turn in repentance to God Who is ready and willing to heal us of whatever is bothering our conscience.

## Advocate

- see entry for "[intercession](#)"

## Anger

- see entry for "[wrath](#)"

# Appease

**Traditional Legal Model** – to satisfy the wrath of an offended God in the sense of making payment to meet the required penalty and to offset the injustice He feels over sin.

**Biblical Healing Model** – the Bible does not use the word in relation to God. God does not need to be appeased in order to change His attitude towards us. He loves us with an everlasting love.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Appease (verb)

“to bring to a state of peace, quiet, ease, calm, or contentment; pacify; soothe: *to appease an angry king.*”

([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Dec. 3, 2017)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

“To make quiet; to calm; to reduce to a state of peace; to still; to pacify; as, to appease the tumult of the ocean or of the passions; to appease hunger or thirst.” (<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/appease>, accessed Dec. 3, 2017)

Especially in a spiritual sense, the word has come to mean not just to quiet or to calm in a general sense but, more specifically, to make a payment to lessen anger or wrath. Here is another definition:

“The **definition of appeasement is the** act of giving something to an aggressive power to keep the peace.” (<https://www.yourdictionary.com/appeasement>)

## Uses of Appease in Scripture

There are only four uses of “appease” or variations thereof in the Bible. Let’s consider each:

1. “And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will **appease** (Strong’s H3722) him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.” (Gen 32:20)

“Appease,” in that verse, is translated from the Hebrew word “kaphar” (Strong’s H3722) which is rendered in the KJV as:

“AV-atonement 71, purge 7, reconciliation 4, reconcile 3, forgive 3, purge away 2, pacify 2, atonement ... made 2, merciful 2, cleansed 1, disannulled 1, appease 1, put off 1, pardon 1, pitch 1; 102” (The On-line Bible)

Its usual meaning is atonement (see “atonement”); to bring to a state of oneness. That is what Jacob wanted for himself and his brother. Clearly though, he feared:

“Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.” (Gen 32:11)

That fear was fear of the be-afraid kind. So it was quite reasonable that the KJV translators would have chosen the word “appease” and, in that case, payment was even offered in the multitude of animals that Jacob sent before him to his brother.

Does that fit: “the act of giving something to an aggressive power to keep the peace”? Here is another definition from the same source that seems to fit this case very well:

“The policy of granting concessions to potential enemies to maintain peace.”  
(<https://www.yourdictionary.com/appeasement>)

2. “After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was **appeased**, (Strong’s H7918) he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.” (Esther 2:1)

It could be said that the king was appeased of his wrath having recognized that Vashti paid a price (appeasement) in having to forfeit her position as queen. The king’s wrath was wrath as we normally understand it but Bible students should be aware that there is a difference between the wrath of man and the wrath of God – (James 1:20) (See wrath.)

3. “A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger **appeaseth** (Strong’s H8252) strife.” (Pro 15:18)

That verse could be understood in the sense in which we today understand wrathful and to appease. However, the “slow to anger” is used in the sense of not to lessen anger but to prevent it. Being slow to anger will not stir up strife like acting in a wrathful way would. Remember, the Bible speaks of “the wrath of man” as distinct from the ways of God.

“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20)

4. “And when the townclerk had **appeased** (Strong’s G2687) the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?” (Acts 19:35)

Cases 3 and 4 give no indication of giving anything to placate anger. There is just the idea of quieting or calming. The next verse in Acts 19 supports this:



“Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought **to be quiet** (Strong’s G2687), and to do nothing rashly.” (Acts 19:36)

To appease doesn’t have to mean, as is commonly thought, to “make payment or reparation in order to calm a rage.” Appeasement, in that sense, is demanded by pagan gods (“somebody is going to pay for this”), but not by Yahweh. He does not ask us to pay; He makes the payment (if you must call it that); He pays the price. A common element of false religions it to have some manner of appeasement to an offended deity.

“It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with men that he will not forgive them unless something is provided to appease his wrath, and that therefore he himself offers the gift to himself, by which he is appeased. (E. J. Waggoner, Waggoner on Romans, p72-73)

The love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 tells us:

“[Love] Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1 Cor 13:7)

To “bear (put up with) all things” is completely inconsistent with the idea of having to be appeased because of a wrong.

## Summary

So, Biblically, to appease can and often does include the concept of making payment to someone who is angry but the Bible never uses that concept in relation to God. God’s “**wrath**” never needs to be appeased.

## Arbitrary\*

(supplemental term)

Arbitrary (adjective): "subject to individual will or judgment without restriction; contingent solely upon one's discretion: an arbitrary decision." (www.dictionary.com)

In the Traditional Legal Model, God, being sovereign, can make whatever laws He chooses and arbitrarily impose penalties for disobedience to them. This is in contrast to God's laws being design laws with natural consequences. An example of an arbitrary law would be a speed limit of 60 km/hr. Someone chose that; it could have been 50 or 55 or 65 or 70 km/hr. Read a [guest article](https://characterofgod.org/salvation-legal-matter/) (<https://characterofgod.org/salvation-legal-matter/>) with good examples of and discussion regarding arbitrary laws.

## Arrows

**Traditional Legal Model:** The arrows of God are understood by some as only weapons to hurt and kill. There are others who recognize figurative uses within the traditional model.

**Biblical Healing Model:** They can be literal weapons yes, but also are used figuratively as convictions of conscience - piercing the heart with a consciousness of guilt as is used of the term "hornets."

While most recognize that there are both figurative and literal uses, the definition is included to make the figurative uses clear and to show the connection to the convictions of the conscience in support of the definition for discomfited.

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

2. In scripture, the arrows of God are the apprehensions of his wrath, which pierce and pain the conscience. Job 6:4. Psalms 38:2. In a like figurative manner, arrows represent the judgments of God, as thunder, lightning, tempests and famine. 2 Samuel 22:15. (<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/arrow>)

That definition connects God's arrows with "apprehensions of his wrath" - anticipating or expecting punishment from God. However, the Bible seems to use arrows figuratively in various ways including in reference to bringing awareness of a sinful condition and of particular sins that should prompt a person to seek forgiveness.

## King David Experienced Arrows

David certainly suffered under the pangs of a guilty conscience:

"O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For **thine arrows** stick fast in me, and **thy hand presseth me sore**. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones **because of my sin**. For **mine iniquities** are gone over mine head: as **an heavy burden** they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. **I am troubled**; I am bowed down greatly; **I go mourning** all the day long." (Psalm 38:1-6)

Compare "thy hand presseth me sore" in verse 2 above with David's similar statement here:

"For day and night **thy hand was heavy upon me**: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah." (Psa 32:4)

The context of Psalm 32 makes it obvious that David's conscience was being smitten. It is clear that in both Psalms 32 and 38 David was mourning over his sins; feeling "arrows" of conviction.

Here is Psalm 39:1-4 from another version:

"O Lord, don't be angry when you discipline me, don't be upset when you correct me. Your **arrows of truth** have pierced deep into my heart, and your healing hand rests upon me. Because **you let me have my way**, I am really sick; my body is weak and unhealthy because of my sin. I am drowning in guilt — the weight of it is more than I can bear." (Psalm 38:1-4, The Remedy)

Fortunately, David responded positively to the calls to his conscience.

## Job and Arrows

Job expressed a similar feeling helping us to understand what God's arrows are:

"For **the arrows of the Almighty are within me**, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the **terrors** of God do set themselves in array against me." (Job 6:4)

Commentaries mentioning this verse show the different interpretations of the "arrows."

"God's 'arrows' are His judgements in general (Psalm 7:12, Deuteronomy 32:23); here in particular pain and sickness (Job 6:4; Job 16:12-13; Lamentations 3:12-13). Blow after blow **from God's 'hand'** (Psalm 32:4; Psalm 39:10) has lighted upon him." (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges comment on Psalm 38:2)

"The 'arrows' of God are the plagues, diseases and pains **with which He assails men**, ch. Job 16:12 (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges comment on Job 6:4)"

That commentary is misleading because, just like Job, they are thinking that it was God sending the afflictions. In fact, a major point of the book of Job is that God is not responsible for troubles. A careful reading of the first two chapters reveals that Satan was behind Job's afflictions. Here is another comment that also blames God in error:

"And he calls them arrows of the Almighty, not only, generally speaking, because **all afflictions come from him**, but particularly, because God's hand was in a singular manner visible and eminent in his sufferings, and especially because they were immediately shot by God into his spirit, so that they were within him," (Benson Commentary on Job 6:4)

Here is one that comes closer to rightly understanding the arrows:

"Which declares that he was not only afflicted in body, but wounded in conscience, which is the greatest battle that the faithful can have." (Geneva Study Bible comment on Job 6:4)

## Arrows and Lightning

It seems that "arrows" (coming from God) refer to something like the pangs of conviction of a guilty conscience. Here is an interesting pairing of verses:

"And he sent out **arrows** (H2671), and **scattered** (H6327) them; **lightning**, (H1300) and **discomfited** (H2000) them." (2 Sam 22:15)

"Cast forth **lightning**, (H1300) and **scatter** (H6327) them: shoot out thine **arrows**, (H2671) and **destroy** (H2000) them." (Psa 144:6)

2 Samuel 22:15	arrows scattered	lightning discomfited
Psalms 144:6	lightning scatter	arrows destroy

It is obvious from the above that "arrows" and "lightning" are used interchangeably - they both cause scattering. "Destroy" in Psalm 144:6 is from the original Hebrew word normally translated as "**discomfited**" which never has the meaning of to destroy. Both arrows and lightning result in discomfiture. It seems that discomfiture is the effect mentally, and scattering (disorder, fleeing) is the physical result.

Arrows and lightning are used together in other verses:

"The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine **arrows** (H2671) they went, and at the shining of thy glittering (original is "**lightning**" H1300) spear." (Hab 3:11)

That verse connects with the miraculous event of the sun and moon standing still (Joshua 10:12) in Joshua's battle with the five kings of the Amorites:

"And the LORD **discomfited** (hamam, H2000) them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah." (Josh 10:10)

It seems that there were arrows of conviction involved; a call to the consciences of those Amorites. It suggests that conviction of conscience was part of what disrupted the battle plans of Israel's enemies. (The "great slaughter" and hailstones that followed (verse 11) will be the subject of another study.)

Another example:

"And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his **arrow** (H2671) shall go forth as the **lightning** (H1300): and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south." (Zech 9:14)

## Arrows and Calls to Service

Arrows to the conscience can not only be to warn of wrong but to call to do right, in line with this verse:

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Look at this verse (God speaking to Job):

"Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" (Job 38:35)

Lightnings are sent forth in order that they may say "here we are." That sounds like a call from God to service as happened with Isaiah:

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, **Here am I**; send me." (Isa 6:8)

# Atonement

**Traditional Legal Model** – atonement is understood to be the satisfaction of God’s justice by the payment of a legally-imposed penalty, that penalty being death – “... the wages of sin is death ...” (Rom 6:23).

**Biblical Healing Model** – the process of becoming one with God (atonement as a verb) or the state of being at one with God (atonement as a noun).

It is important to understand that the meaning of the word “atonement” has changed from what it was in the past. Here is a description of the history of that change by Graham Maxwell, who was a Biblical scholar well-versed in the original languages:

“What does atonement mean? Now, commonly, in the last century or two or three, it has come to mean ‘making amends, paying a penalty, to meet legal demands, that adjustment in legal standing may be justly accomplished.’ That is not the original meaning of the term, and it is definitely not the meaning of the biblical word. The biblical word in Greek is ‘*kattalage*’. There’s no hint of making amends there. It’s ‘reconciliation’. All the dictionaries agree that this word ‘atonement’ is a made-up word – ‘at-one-ment’. Now, that seems almost too cute to be true. But that’s the way it started. But it was based on a verb, ‘to one’. Two people are fighting, and you are sent out to ‘one’ them. Not ‘win’ them, to ‘one’ them; o-n-e. And then when you had succeeded in ‘one-ing’ people, then, hopefully, they would remain in a state of oneness. And the state of being ‘at one’, in harmony, is ‘atonement’. Now, if you want to read the history of the word, there’s only one dictionary that really does it, that’s a multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*. And if you look in there for the history of the word, it’s very colorful. It shows how for a long time it was used in its original sense of being at one, reconciling people to harmony; friendship is often mentioned, unity, and so on. Now, later on somehow, it was changed to mean ‘making amends, paying penalty’, and that’s the way it’s commonly used now. But that is not the original word and that is not the meaning of the Greek. That’s the way a word can develop.” (Graham Maxwell)

That the meaning has changed can be shown by comparing dictionaries:

## From a Modern Dictionary:

### Atonement (noun)

1. satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury; amends.
2. (sometimes initial capital letter) Theology. the doctrine concerning the reconciliation of God and humankind, especially as accomplished through the life, suffering, and death of Christ.
3. Christian Science. the experience of humankind’s unity with God exemplified by Jesus Christ.

4. Archaic. reconciliation; agreement.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Nov. 15, 2017)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

1. Agreement; concord; reconciliation, after enmity or controversy. Romans 5:11.
  - He seeks to make atonement
  - Between the Duke of Glo'ster and your brothers. Shak.
2. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; with for.
  - And Moses said to Aaron, go to the altar, and offer thy sin-offering, and thy burnt-offering, and make an *atonement* for thyself and for the people. Leviticus 9:7.
  - When a man has been guilty of any vice, the best *atonement* he can make for it is, to warn others not to fall into the like.
  - The Phocians behaved with so much gallantry, that they were thought to have made a sufficient *atonement* for their former offense.
3. In theology, the expiation of sin made by the obedience and personal sufferings of Christ.  
([webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/atonement](http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/atonement), accessed Nov, 15, 2017)

Notice that the modern dictionary includes "reconciliation" in its fourth definition and calls it "archaic" whereas Webster's dictionary has "reconciliation" in its first meaning.

## Atonement's Original Meaning

So atonement, originally, meant reconciliation or agreement (the first definition in Webster's 1828 dictionary) whereas now it has changed to mean more like: pay back or penalty and the original meaning has been shifted to fourth place (in the modern dictionary quoted above) and labelled as "archaic." No one wants to be labelled as archaic in how they talk but, in this case, being archaic is being true to the original, intended meaning.

While the meaning of the word atonement has changed over time, there have also been a variety of theories of how the atonement works. These are summarized in the first four minutes of [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysTPncaK2XE) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysTPncaK2XE>) (11 min) by [Dr. Timothy Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>)



## Awe

- see entry for "[fear](#)"

## Biblical Healing Model\*

(supplemental term)

God designed His law as the law of life, violations of which have intrinsic, **natural consequences** leading towards death. Those who rebel against His law of love will exhibit that rebellion in unrighteous acts – sins. This state of sinfulness causes condemnation in the conscience and has punishment built into it. When a person persists in rejection of and distrust in God, God honors that free-will choice and in “anger” leaves the sinner to the consequences (effectively, what some would call the penalty) of his choices.

If guilt brings conviction enough to cause a sinner to choose repentance, he will receive forgiveness which has already been granted by God to all. A realization of the grace and glory (character) of God to provide salvation leads the sinner to trust (have faith in) God; to be justified or set right with Him – what the Bible calls atonement – the condition of being “at one” with God. The repentant sinner then, as He beholds the righteousness of Christ, grows in sanctification towards perfection of character. Christ’s life (typified by His blood) and sacrifice frees (ransoms) us from what held us captive – the lies of Satan about the character of God and our own sinful natures.

# Blood

**Traditional Legal Model** – “Blood” (the bodily fluid) is the means or currency used to make payment for the legal debt the sinner owes.

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb 9:22)

No blood shed = no remission or forgiveness of sins. It can be either:

- the sinner’s blood = eternal death or
- the blood of the sin offering, Jesus, on the sinners account = life

**Biblical Healing Model** – Blood is a metaphor representing the life – “For the life of the flesh is in the blood ...” (Lev 17:11). So Jesus’ blood stands for His life.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” (Lev 17:11)

This verse mentions both death and life:

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Rom 5:10)

So there is a real sense in which it is the life of Christ that leads to atonement. That atonement is not in the sense of legal payment but in the sense of a healing in our relationship with God. It is seeing Jesus, the self-sacrificing, ever-loving and forgiving representation of His Father that brings atonement.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

**A Modern Dictionary** has one definition that relates to this study:

**Blood** (noun)

2. the vital principle; life:

([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

**Webster’s 1828 Dictionary**

**Blood** (noun)

5. Life. Shall I not require his *blood* at your hands? 2 Samuel 4:11.

11. The death and sufferings of Christ. Being now justified by his *blood* we shall be saved from wrath through him. Romans 5:3. [Note: Webster's error - should read Romans 5:9]

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/blood>)

Both dictionaries include blood as a symbol of the life, Webster's perhaps more so.

## Discussion

Since the definitions are similar the point of this glossary entry is more about the role of blood in salvation.

Christians speak of being "cleansed by the blood," "washed in the blood," and sing about "power in the blood." There seems almost to be a concept that it actually covers the physical record of sins making them unreadable and therefore unpunishable. That the blood and its effects are not to be understood quite so literally is shown by Jesus' words:

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John 6:53-56)

This clearly points to Jesus' blood being a symbol – a symbol of His life. The power is not really in the blood itself; it is in the One who shed His blood, the One who is "... the way, the truth and the life ..." (John 14:6)

Jesus is the way to the Father:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

Jesus is the truth about the Father:

"Jesus saith ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Fath ..." (John 14:9)

Jesus is the life; our source of everlasting life:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ..." (John 3:36)

That sacrifices in the Old Testament were not actually required for forgiveness is shown by numerous verses showing that **sacrifices** were not God's idea.

# Blot

**Traditional Legal Model** - When payment in blood has been made and accepted by the sinner, the debt of his guilt and record of his sin is blotted out.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Sins are blotted out from a person's actions and thinking. The tendency to give in to temptation has been overcome. It is not a case of them being blotted out from **record books**.

David spoke of his sin being blotted out with the context showing his desire was to have them blotted from his life not from record books.

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and **cleanse me** from my sin." (Psa 51:2)

It was "wash me" and cleanse me," not "erase my record."

## Blot: Three Possible Scriptural Meanings

**Webster's 1828 Dictionary** gives three main meanings of blot as related to Biblical usage:

6. In scripture, [1] to blot one out of the book of life, is to reject him from the number of those who are to be saved. [2] To blot out a name, a person or a nation, is to destroy the person or nation; to exterminate or consume. [3] **To blot out sins, is to forgive them.** Sins are compared to debts, which are **recorded in God's book of remembrance, and when paid, are crossed or cancelled.**

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/blot>)

Looking at each of those options:

**[1]** Names can be blotted out of the book of life signifying that a person is lost. See the **definition of books** for a discussion of blotting of names in relation to the record books of heaven. This is expressed by this verse:

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will **not blot out his name** out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev 3:5)

**[2]** Total destruction to the point their name is not even remembered.

"Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and **blot out their name** from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they." (Deut 9:14)

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly **put out the remembrance of Amalek** from under heaven." (Exo 17:14)

[3] In this study, we are concerned with the blotting out of actual sins.

## Blotting Out Sins: Two Major Views

The question is: What does it mean for sins to be blotted out? There are two major views of what is actually blotted out: - sins themselves or merely the record of them. We will look at the two views and see if scripture and even common sense agrees with either one. First, from the common Christian understanding:

"The picture is that our sin is recorded in a heavenly book. The bookkeeper is God, and our sins are entered in a ledger in our debit column. ... To those who have faith in Jesus Christ, His Son, God applies the blood of Christ to our sin and cancels the debt we owe Him. Only the blood of the spotless Lamb of God can **blot out** our transgressions, erase our debits, and make us clean before God." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/blot-out-our-transgressions.html>)

Here is a less-common view:

"... the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, -- **blots out all iniquity** ... We need to be on our guard against the idea that the blotting out of sin is merely as the passing of a sponge over a slate, or an entry in a ledger, to balance the account. This is **not** the blotting out of sin. An ignorant man who saw a thermometer for the first time thought to lessen the heat by breaking it. But how much effect did this have upon the weather? Just as much as the wiping out of **the record** of his sin has upon the sinner.

Though all the record of all our sin, even though written with the finger of God, were erased, the sin would remain, because the sin is in us. "The blotting out of sin is the erasing of it from the nature, the being of man. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin...

"The erasing of sin is the blotting of it from our natures, so that we shall know it no more... (in other words) they do not think of doing it any more. This is the work of Christ in the true sanctuary..." (E.J. Waggoner, RH, Sep. 30, 1902)

Deciding which view is correct has to be related to the meaning of sin itself and whether or not God even keeps a record of sins for His legal accounting purposes.

## Why are Sins Sins?

**Sins** are sinful not because God has arbitrarily decided so, but because they harm ourselves and others. Would a God of love be more concerned about a sin hurting us or that there is a record of that sin in His heavenly accounting book; in some thick ledger with your name on it? Is God more concerned with people or records?

If a sin is hurting you, what benefit would there be to you from the **record** of it being blotted out? Obviously, there is no immediate benefit. Perhaps the benefit of escaping God's punishment - if you believe that God arbitrarily imposes **punishment** for sin. So, reason and principles such as "God is love" tells us that the problem is the sin itself and not a record of it. If people didn't sin there would be no question of keeping records of sin. Sin is the root of the problem.

## Does God Keep a Record of Sins?

"[love] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, **thinketh no evil**;" (1 Cor 13:5)

"It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, **it keeps no record of wrongs**." (1 Cor 13:5, NIV)

"or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and **it keeps no record of being wronged**." (1 Cor 13:5, NLT)

"It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own *benefit*; it is not provoked, **does not keep an account of a wrong suffered**," (1 Cor 13:5, NASB)

God does not even keep a record of sins for the purpose of punishment. He does, of course, know all things (omniscience) and does not forget.

## Where is Sin Recorded?

"The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond: *it is* graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;" (Jer 17:1)

That is speaking of the individual conscience described in more detail [here](https://characterofgod.org/conscience-bible/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/conscience-bible/>)

If someone says "God will blot out my sin" what do they mean? Usually, that He will erase the record of them, perhaps forget (as in not even being capable of remembering that we

committed them) and not punish us for them. In reality, sin is blotted out from a person in the sense that they no longer have the desire to do it. They will still be physically capable and God is not preventing them from sinning but their characters have been so changed into the likeness of Christ's character that they would rather die than commit a sin.

What is the most important "sin" to blot out of our experience? See [part 8](https://characterofgod.org/sanctuary-mind/) (<https://characterofgod.org/sanctuary-mind/>) and [part 14](https://characterofgod.org/original-sin-definition/) (<https://characterofgod.org/original-sin-definition/>) of the [Cleansing of the Sanctuary Series](https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/) (<https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/>). That series of studies has much to say about the process of blotting out of sin **from us**.

## How Sin is Blotted Out

A sin is an event. You can't change the fact that it has happened; you can't go back in time. What this is really talking about is blotting out or removing the sinful tendencies from the life; the desire for sin in the mind.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that **your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" (Acts 3:19)

"Blotted out" in that verse is "exaleipho" (G1813). Compare with this verse where "exaleipho" is translated as "wipe away:"

"And God shall **wipe away** (G1813) 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)

God is not physically wiping away tears, rather, as "the former things are passed away," there will be no more cause for crying - there will be no more tears to wipe away. Likewise, God is not blotting out merely records of sin but the tendency and desire from human hearts to commit sin itself. For such a blessed person there will be no sins to record.

"When" in Acts 3:19 should be translated as "so that" as most versions do which changes the order of events:

Word used	Resulting order of events		
"When"	times of refreshing	→	sins blotted out
"So that"	sins blotted out	→	times of refreshing

And note that the times of refreshing refers to the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit which occurs when God's followers are prepared for it.



"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and **latter rain**." (James 5:7)

The husbandman, one who tends a vineyard (Gen 9:20), waits for the fruit to ripen which happens when the latter rain falls. God, waiting for His followers to reflect His character (1 John 3:2), gives His presence, His Holy Spirit, when the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in His people and that happens in relation to the process of the blotting out of their sins:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath **given to them that** obey him." (Acts 5:32)

These two passages make a connection between the **blotting out of sins** and **remission of sins**.

"**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that **your sins may be blotted out**, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" And **he shall send Jesus Christ**, which before was preached unto you:" (Acts 3:19-20)

"Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission of sins**, and **ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**." (Acts 2:38)

## Books/records

**Traditional Legal Model** – a legal account of every sin a person has committed and whether it has been pardoned or not to be used as the basis for judgment (Rev 20:12). “Better remember and confess every sin.”

**Biblical Healing Model** – a record of each person’s:

- acts, good and bad
- choices, especially to love and trust God or not
- individuality and character

The books/records are involved in determining (largely a self-determination) if a person is healed of their sin sickness and thus are safe to save.

## The Records of Heaven are NOT for Legal Accounting Purposes

Does God keep records in order to execute retributive justice; to get even or even the score? Scripture says no:

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;” (1 Cor 13:5)

The Strong’s definitions for “thinketh” (logizomai; G3049) include:

- 1) to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over
- 1a) to take into account, to make an account of

**God does not keep a record** (<https://characterofgod.org/thinketh-no-evil/>) of sins in order to ensure that a penalty is **imposed** for every sin. Here are some other versions of that verse:

“... does not take into account a wrong suffered.” (1 Cor 13:5 NASB)

“... does not keep a record of wrongs.” (1 Cor 13:5 Holman Christian Study Bible)

We are also told that sins are removed far from us:

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psa 103:12)

“... thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” (Isa 38:17)

“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19)

Of course, this is not referring to the act of sin itself. Nor is it referring to God’s memory of sins. The omniscient God does not forget as in not being able to remember (“... God ... knoweth all things.” 1 John 3:20) but He chooses to not “remember” sins as in “I will make you pay for that.”

## What is in the Books/Records of Heaven?

Before going further let’s look at what is contained in the records. This verse will be helpful:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” (Rev 20:12)

Helpful because it makes a distinction between one book called the Book of Life and other books presumably with different content. Each of those will be discussed in its own section below

## The Book of Life

These two verses indicate a direct relationship between a name being in the book of life and final destiny:

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:15)

“And there shall in no wise enter into it [into the New Jerusalem] any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Rev 21:27)

There are a number of verses indicating that names can be blotted out of the book of life such as:

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” (Rev 3:5)

Other verses speaking of the book of life and names being blotted out include: Deut 9:14, Psa 69:28, Rev 13:8, 17:8, 22:19.

This verse could be seen as a problem:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” (Exo 32:33)

A problem because, as Romans 3:23 says, “all have sinned.” This is a good clue that “**sin**” can **mean** more than simply breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

## The Books (Other than the Book of Life)

Rev 20:12 quoted above indicates that the contents of the books are used in judgment. The contents of the books are also clearly connected to people’s acts. This shows that our acts are not forgotten; information is not lost. The books are records of information in some form, not necessarily in the bound format we are familiar with. What do those records include?

**A record of each person’s acts** not for the purpose of deciding fate (salvation or not) as that is determined by their decisions but to determine rewards:

“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41)

Rewards are distinct from the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23). One must receive the free gift in order to be there (in heaven) to get the rewards.

**A record of each person’s choices** especially whether they have chosen to love and trust God or not.

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Josh 24:15)

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Pro 3:5)

To choose to trust in God is to deem Him worthy of trust. It could be seen as a record of each person’s judgment of God.

“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” (Rom 3:4)

Those choices should/will result in a change of character into one that heavenly beings would be willing to live with. Essentially, the question is “were they healed?” or “are they safe to take to heaven?”

**A record of each person’s character** particularly how it was at the end of their life. Character, along with identity and individuality, must be on record in some way so that when each person is resurrected, they are raised as the same person. Think of it: when you are raised to life, will you still be you?

## Who are the Records For?

A key question here is to ask “who needs to see the records?”

**Does God need records?** When we think of judgment, we normally think of God judging us. See the **judgment definition** page for some discussion on this. Obviously, God needs to know who to raise in each resurrection:

“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28-29)

So, God needs to know but He does not need anything like a written record for that purpose. He also needs to know us – our identity, individuality, character so that when you are resurrected, you are you. But, again, He knows all things. Any “books” in heaven are not because He needs them. There are a few other verses referencing books:

“Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” (Psa 56:8)

“Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.” (Psa 139:16)

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.” (Mal 3:16)

These may be simply using the metaphor of books to refer to the fact that God knows and remembers all things.

**Do we need records?** There is a sense in which we judge ourselves:

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46)

Why did Jesus say it would be hard for those who have riches to enter heaven (Mark 10:23)? He restated in Mark like this:

“... Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:24)

It is largely a matter of whether or not a person trusts God and His promises or trusts to his own resources. It is not a matter of whether God forgives sin or not; He freely offers forgiveness to all. The question is whether or not each person has received that forgiveness. Remember, **forgiveness is a two-part transaction**.

Really, each one decides his own fate through the choices made before death. The judgement only verifies it. In the final judgment, each person’s record comes into His own mind and, ultimately, the lost will see where they went wrong. Paul relates God as saying (in the context of final judgment):

“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” (Rom 14:11)

This can most easily be understood as every person acknowledging that God has been right in what He has done in regard to the plan of salvation and especially in His assessment of people’s characters.

**Do others need to see our records?** Do others need to see the record of our lives in the judgment? We can reason that people will want to have many questions answered. Questions like “why wasn’t my loved one saved?” The Bible does not say much about that but there is a clue in this verse:

“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)

This final reference to wiping away tears applies to after the thousand years of the millennium. You might think that the saved would have nothing but happiness after being taken to heaven, however, there will certainly be moments of sadness as people learn the details of why certain loved ones are not there. Also, the lost will finally experience the second death at the end of the millennium and that will certainly be a very sad experience. But then – on to eternity and those “pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11).

## Where are the Records?

God knows everything but it need not be in any written form for His use. Will there be a record for others to see? We are not sure (except there are the clues mentioned earlier). What is most needed is for **us** to see the justice of our own fate. For that purpose, our life's record needs to be available. Job wished that there was a permanent record of his words:

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" (Job 19:23-24)

It is interesting that scripture says that sins are recorded something like that:

"The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;" (Jer 17:1)

The verse specifies where the record is; symbolically upon the horns of altars and literally in the heart or mind. Sin can be brought to the attention (conscience) of a person by certain actions such as:

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Rom 12:20)

Of course, there are no literal coals of fire involved but the record of sin goes into the mind (the memory) and will be brought forth (recalled) in the final events. Science records the reality of LREs (life-review experiences, distinct from near-death experiences) where a person, in extreme threat of imminent death, will have their life "[flash before their eyes](https://www.thecut.com/2017/01/what-it-means-when-your-life-flashes-before-your-eyes.html)."

(<https://www.thecut.com/2017/01/what-it-means-when-your-life-flashes-before-your-eyes.html>) See Wikipedia on [life-review experiences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_review).

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life\\_review](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_review))

The subconscious stores all life experiences even if, under normal circumstances, they can't all be recalled. There are clues in scripture that something resulting from sin is stored up (recorded) to finally have its effect. The Bible speaks of the wicked "conceiving" (in a metaphorical sense) combustible material (sin or something resulting from it) as chaff:

"Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you." (Isa 33:11)

They don't suddenly become fire-breathing. "Breath" is the Hebrew word "ruach" most commonly translated as "spirit."

"None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity." (Isa 59:4)



“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (James 1:15)

What brings forth death? – sin coming from their own spirit; essentially it is self-destruction.

This could sound like the lost are being physically burned alive. While there is burning it is with fire in a symbolic sense – at first. The literal, physical, cleansing fire will soon follow to clean up the corpses. The final fate of the lost and how all this happens is described in my ebook [The Truth About the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources/#second-death). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources/#second-death>)

It is what is in our own hearts (or minds, memory – the record) that condemns us:

“For if our heart [or conscience] condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.” (1 John 3:20-21)

# Born Again

“Born again” is a popular term among many Christians sometimes used almost as a status symbol of their spiritual attainment. But when and how is such a person really reborn?

**Traditional Legal Model** – being born again applies to people who have accepted Jesus as Savior with the understanding that they are sinners subject to the death penalty and willing to have Jesus die in their place to pay the death penalty they owe. It is a new lease on life.

**Biblical Healing Model** – being born again refers to the beginning of a completely new life with a new heart and new desires, motives and purposes. All this is produced by beholding Christ, appreciating His true character and wanting to emulate it. There is no price to be paid to God.

Here is an example of the common understanding of the meaning of “born again”:

“The phrase “**born again**” applies to people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior or Redeemer. The born again soul realizes that they are a sinner (Romans 3:23) and that the penalty for that sin is death (Romans 6:23). To rectify the circumstances, God sent His only Son to die in their place, to take the punishment for sin (Romans 5:8).”  
(<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/salvation/what-is-a-born-again-christian.html>)

See the glossary definitions for “punishment,” “sin” and “sin (made to be)” for a better understanding of terms used in that statement.

## Born Again Means a New Life

The term “born again” appears three times in the KJV, most notably in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again**.” (John 3:3-7)

Nicodemus did not understand the spiritual meaning of being born again. Most people today see it as mainly or only a mental assent to acknowledge Jesus as their Savior. They may start attending church and even read their Bible but often there is little change beyond that.

The new-birth metaphor suggests that the born-again believer is starting over with a fresh slate, a clean record. Being "born again" also carries the idea of "becoming children of God":

“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: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

The “but of God” denotes a birth distinct from the first birth which is of blood (physical) and of the will of man/flesh.

## **Those not Born Again Cannot See the Kingdom of God**

Does “... he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) mean a person cannot be saved? It may have less to do with gaining heaven or not and more to do with the perception, in this life, of the principles of God’s kingdom. If a person does not have the new desires, motives and purposes which come from beholding Christ and the principles of His kingdom they cannot see - in the sense of understanding – that the kingdom of heaven is a complete inner change, a total paradigm shift.

That helps to explain this verse:

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matt 11:11)

Jesus was not saying that John the Baptist was not to be saved. Rather, it was a statement about John’s understanding of the principles of God’s kingdom. John, at that point, lacked a complete understanding of the nature of the kingdom of heaven especially in terms of its non-violent aspect. John’s thoughts of the Messiah were more along this line:

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matt 3:12)

More on John’s understanding here: <https://characterofgod.org/john-the-baptist-misunderstood-god/>

## **Can "a Christian" be Partly (or not even) Born Again?**

Physically, a person is either born or not. The transition is very brief.

Metaphors often cannot be applied exactly. The moment that might be most closely associated with the time of new birth might be when one realizes and accepts that God truly loves them, that they are completely safe with Him and that He will never harm them.

Many Christians claim to be born again simply because they have stated an acceptance of Christ. But, in probably most cases, they have not thought through all the implications of this new relationship. They probably believe that God will, in the end, punish the lost with fire. Subconsciously, they likely have the fear that they could meet the same fate.

It is surprising that even the apostle Peter was said by Jesus to be in need of being converted (a term equivalent to being born again):

“But I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not: and **when thou art converted**, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22:32)

A person could even deceive themselves into thinking they are born again because they have met the common concept of what that entails or have experienced the feelings that are often associated with it.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

## Being Born Again is Only the Start

Both “born again” and “converted” implies more of a change than a mere mental assent. Aside from having a new heart (which scripture says many times), there will or should be new desires, new motives and new purposes – a completely new life.

One could perceive the loving-kindness of God, see His benevolence, discern the wisdom and justice of His law founded upon the eternal principle of love and yet not be experiencing the full new life. Paul the apostle understood this, saying:

“... I consent unto the law that it is good.” (Rom 7:16)

Knowing what he did, he recognized his condition:

“... I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Rom 7:14)

Recognizing his lack, he cried out:

“O wretched man that I am! **who shall deliver me** from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24)

## The Answer

The answer to Paul's frustration was given in Jesus' interview with Nicodemus:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:14-18)

This is stated more succinctly by:

**"... Behold the Lamb of God,** which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

Jesus also stated how this works when He said:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me." (John 12:32)

It is by beholding Jesus, how He lived and treated others, and recognizing that His mission was to show us the character of the Father that we are changed.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

Recognizing this better way, as we emulate His example in our own lives day by day, the change just happens.

## By What Means are We Born Again?

The third of three verses using "born again" says:

"Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

Being born again, in that reference, happens under the influence of the word of God whether that was in reaction to Jesus' personal influence or through His Word, the Bible, which gives the record of His life.

So that is the key for us; to prayerfully study the Word of God with a desire to understand what God is really like that we might reflect that character in our own lives.

## Born Again Equivalent Terms

John 3:37, already quoted, shows that "**born of the Spirit**" is an equivalent term. Another is "born of God" which is used five times, all in the book of first John. An example is:

"For whatsoever is **born of God** overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith." (1 John 5:4)

That verse points to the importance of being "born again" or "born of God" to achieving victory in the spiritual life.

# Breach

**Traditional Legal Model** – some define a breach as God’s action to punish sin. Examples:

“breach—the calamity wherewith God visited Israel for their sin” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary)

“The repairer of the breach: breach is put here collectively for breaches, which were made by God’s judgment breaking in upon them in suffering the walls of their towns and cities to be demolished, and their state broken, Isaiah 5:5.” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary)

**Biblical Healing Model** – breaches are the actions of man breaking God’s law and the results of those actions (so both a verb and noun). Breaches can, ultimately, include broken relationships.

**Dictionary definitions** do not vary significantly between modern ones and Webster’s 1828 dictionary.

Aside from physical breaches (as in a wall or defense), a breach can be of a law as this verse shows:

“Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore **this iniquity shall be to you as a breach** ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.” (Isa 30:12-13)

The iniquity is seen as a breach or the breaking of a law. A breach is also the result, the damage, the breaching of a defense, the hole in the wall, etc.

Please see this [page](https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/) (<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>) for an important explanation of a breach in relation to God’s law.

As explained in that link, a sin is a breach of the law and leads to what? God actively **punishing** the sin? No. Rather, it leads to breaches in God’s wall of protection leaving the sinner subject to the natural consequences of his actions and even the attack of Satan.

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a **breach** (H7667) in the spirit.” (Pro 15:4)

“Your sin in rebelling against God, rejecting the warnings of his prophets, and trusting in your own devices shall bring you into the condition of a wall in which there is a ‘breach,’” (Pulpit Commentary)

A breach can also cause an injury to a person or group of people:

“What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?” (Lam 2:13)

“Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.” (Jer 14:17)

“Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.” (Isa 30:26)

“Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.” (Lev 24:20)

“And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a **breach** in the tribes of Israel.” (Jud 21:15)

Why a breach in the tribes of Israel? Because the tribe of Benjamin was virtually wiped out. Who did that? God or the other 11 tribes? While the verse above can make it seem that God did it, other verses show the almost-genocide of the tribe was by the action of the other eleven tribes. – Judges 20:35, 48

This must be understood in terms of the common practice of Bible writers [ascribing to God responsibility](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/) for the actions of man.

For an example of man causing a breach in the law and how it (not God) caused the death of one involved in that breach read [The Breach of Uzzah](https://characterofgod.org/breach-uzzah/).

Please read an explanation of the phrase “[repairer of the breach](https://characterofgod.org/isaiah-58-12-repairer-breach/)” as in the following verse to see that it is referring to more than how we commonly think of sin against God’s law.

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, **The repairer of the breach**, The restorer of paths to dwell in.” (Isa 58:12)



# Chastening of the Lord

Is the chastening of the Lord the same as the chastening man would do?

**Traditional Legal Model** – God personally chastens, in whatever way He deems necessary, to prevent man from sinning. The chastening of the Lord is distinct from punishment in that it is remedial rather than simply retributive.

**Biblical Healing Model** – chastening involves God allowing us to experience the negative consequences of our sins with the goal of teaching us to avoid those sins that hurt us and others.

## Modern Dictionary

**Chasten** verb (used with object)  
to inflict suffering upon for purposes of moral improvement; chastise.  
(dictionary.com)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Chastening**, *noun*  
Correction; punishment for the purpose of reclaiming.  
(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com>)

## The Chastening of the Lord Misunderstood

Here is a description of chastening from one popular Christian website showing errors in understanding:

"Chastening can come in the form of guilty feelings, unpleasant circumstances, loss of peace, relationship fractures, or any number of negative consequences for choosing sin. Sometimes, **the chastening of the Lord can be physical illness or even death** (1 Corinthians 11:30)." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/chasten-chastening.html>)

Chastening by death! The verse quoted does refer to death (sleep):

"For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (1 Cor 11:30)

However, the weakness and sickness is a result of reaping what has been sown, rather than coming directly from God. Chastening with death would certainly stop a person from sinning but does nothing towards moral improvement. Here is more from the same source;

"Examples of chastening are found throughout the Bible. The Israelites were continually disobeying God's commands (Numbers 14:21-23; Judges 2:1-2; 2 Kings 18:12). He was patient with them, He sent prophets to plead with them, and He warned them many times. But when they dug in their heels and embraced idols or evil practices, God brought chastening upon them in the form of plagues or enemy attacks (Jeremiah 40:3). He still loved them, and in His love He could not allow them to continue in behavior **that would destroy them.**" (<https://www.gotquestions.org/chasten-chastening.html>)

"He could not allow them to continue in behavior **that would destroy them**" so He sent "plagues or enemy attacks" **to destroy them**! That makes no sense whatsoever! There is indeed great confusion over God's actions and character. (Note that the purpose of quoting sources is not to attack those sources but merely to show examples of wrong thinking that is so common in Christendom.)

A correct understanding of Biblical terms (as this glossary attempts to promote) clears up the confusion. However, there can still be verses that present some difficulty:

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb 12:5-6)

Scourgeth? Jesus was scourged. The scourging seems to go with the chastening. However, the word for "scourgeth" comes from a word that can have the metaphorical meaning of "a calamity, misfortune esp. sent by God to discipline or punish" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

Other word studies indicate that God "sending" can merely mean that, in honoring man's free will, He allows the consequences of man's choices to occur. See the definitions for "**sent**" and for "**punishment**." Also, this commentary:

"The experiences of life are all 'of the Lord' in the sense that nothing can happen to us except by His permission. God is never the author of suffering and sorrow, though He may, at times, permit us to experience them." (SDA BC Vol. 7, p483, on Hebrews 12:5)

Clearly, God does chasten but it is always for our benefit, for our training and with the goal of leading us into a better relationship with Him.

"For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but **he for our profit**, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb 12:10)

Biblical discipline or chastening is "for our good" ("profit," KJV). This is as opposed to punishment for the purpose of the satisfaction of the one punishing to have revenge or meet the requirements of an **imposed penalty**.

"For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us **for our good**, so that we may share His holiness."  
(Heb 12:10, NASB)

## The Chastening of the Lord - With a Rod?

"I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will **chasten him with the rod** of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:" (2 Sam 7:14)

To chasten with the rod of men does not mean God borrows some man's rod and uses it to straighten people out. Rather, He allows the consequences of our actions to occur and, in some cases, that involves attacks by other nations.

"**O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger**, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will **send** him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." (Isa 10:5-6)

God "used" (allowed) nations to afflict His people which resulted in their chastisement. Notice "send" (shalach; H7971), as mentioned earlier, often means to allow something to happen.

## The Chastening of the Lord is a Blessing

We have generally thought that "the chastening of the Lord" refers to our getting sick, or getting in an accident, or some such misfortune. But, in fact, it's the work of the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin itself or of our condition and need of Divine aid.

"And when he [the Comforter, the Spirit of Christ] is come, he will **reprove** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John 16:8)

The first stage of chastening is to bring an awareness of sin or the lesson is not learned.

"**Blessed** (esher, H835) *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;" (Psa 94:12)

"Behold, **happy** (esher, H835) *is* the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:" (Job 5:17)

The chastening of the Lord always involves teaching and correction for the purpose of blessing. The purpose is not to harm us but for our good.

# Command

For every **command** we are given we exercise our **free-will** choice in response. The two are closely related and are treated together here.

**Traditional Legal Model:** God has given commandments which He commands us to obey and if we use our free will not to obey we have sinned and there is a price to pay to Him which He requires to satisfy His justice.

**Biblical Healing Model:** All of God's commands/commandments are given for our good, not His. Anything we do against His commands naturally leads to negative consequences which is why He encourages us not to do certain things - He is trying to protect us from harm. He never threatens, coerces or punishes in order to sway our free will.

With God we always have free will. We can even choose to accept the mark of the beast and be lost - or not. The question is whether we can exercise that power of choice, of the will, **free** of coercion and threat. Ultimately, the question is: does God use coercion and threats or is the free will He has given us truly free?

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

Command, *verb transitive*

5. To direct; to send.

The Lord shall *command* the blessing on thee. Deuteronomy 28:8

The Lord will *command* his loving kindness. Psalms 42:8

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/command>)

## Do God's Commands Negate Free Will?

When God gives us commandments or commands or tells or asks us to do something, is that negating free will or honoring and respecting it? It really depends on whether or not there is force or coercion (real or implied) to obtain obedience. We also have to take into account the actual meaning of the words and the context in which they are used.

If the "commands/commandments" are commands as commonly understood, that opens the way for force or some kind of coercive pressure to get compliance.

If the "commands/commandments" are given by one who is truly honoring free will does that even give the option of using any force or pressure to obtain compliance? No, it cannot be.

We closely associate commands with laws. A fundamental question is the nature of God's laws. Are they arbitrary, imposed laws or natural design laws?

If the laws are arbitrary and imposed, the "imposed" implies "must do" and the law-giver is free to also apply pressure and punishments

If the laws are natural design laws, then any pressure to comply is inherent in the consequences that would result from noncompliance. For example, this "law":

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all **they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.**" (Matt 26:52)

After telling Peter to put away his sword, Jesus stated a law or principle that if one lives by the sword (symbolic of engaging in violence toward others) they naturally (because they have made enemies) risk dying by the sword (by violence from those retaliating or taking revenge).

### **Imposed law reaction to violations**

The range of options for one giving imposed commands, in cases of non-compliance is everything from doing nothing to punishment with death. The range of options is so broad and arbitrary because the law is also arbitrary and has no certain natural effect. For example, a person might drive well over the speed limit without natural consequences. But if the punishment for violation of an imposed law is set at, for example, death, the commander or his system must impose it to meet justice.

### **Design law reaction to violations**

In cases of non-compliance to design laws the designer of the laws does not need to do anything in order for the effect to happen as the result; consequences, which might, at times, be erroneously thought of as punishment, occur as a natural result. Jump off a tall building and you will experience the results.

The designer doing nothing in the case of one who has violated natural law and is subject to the natural consequences could be viewed as being indifferent to the violation or any resulting suffering. However, God is never indifferent or untouched by any suffering as evidenced by this verse:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." (Matt 10:29)

In fact, God will often provide an accommodation which implies doing something to minimize the suffering.

There are many examples of accommodation where God has attempted to minimize the negative effects resulting from man's wrong choices. <https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/>

## We Want a King

Part of the deal (covenant) of inheriting the Promised Land was that God would be their God:

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God.**" (Gen 17:8)

Being their God implies that He would reign over them, give them direction etc. Later, they rejected God's rule:

"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but **they have rejected me**, that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam 8:7)

God even told them the consequences of that choice but they insisted. He tried to reason with them but He did not force His rule on them. "Did not" because He cannot as the use of force is contrary to the Divine principles of His character. In fact, rather than force compliance, He granted them their desire to have a king. This could be termed an accommodation.

## The Ten Commandments

"And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the **words** of the covenant, the ten **commandments.**" (Exo 34:28)

"Words" and "commandments" in that verse are both from the Hebrew word "dabar," (H1697)

01697 דָּבָר *dabar daw-baw'*

from **01696**; n m;

AV-**word 807**, thing 231, matter 63, acts 51, chronicles 38, saying 25, **commandment 20**, misc 204; 1439

1) speech, word, speaking, thing

1a) speech

1b) saying, utterance

1c) word, words

1d) business, occupation, acts, matter, case, something, manner (by extension)

"Dabar" is most commonly translated as "word" (807 times or 56% of uses) and as "commandment" only 20 times (1.4%).

### Words (more than 50) that H1697 is translated into:

act, advice, affair, answer, because of, book, business, care, case, cause, certain rate, **commandment**, counsel, decree, deed, due, duty, effect, errand, evil favored, hurt, language, manner, matter, message, thing, oracle, portion, promise, provision, purpose, question, rate, reason, report, request, sake, saying, sentence, some (uncleanness), somewhat to say, speech, talk, task, thing (concerning), thought, tidings, what(-soever), which, **word**, work.

The first use of "dabar," (H1697) is:

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one **speech** (H1697)." (Gen 11:1)

"After these things the **word** (H1697) of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward." (Gen 15:1)

That sounds more like a promise than a command as does this verse:

"And thine ears shall hear a word (H1697) behind thee, saying, **This is the way**, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (Isa 30:21)

### The Ten Commandments as Promises

A good way to think of the Ten Commandments are as promises. The verse before the one giving the first commandment says:

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exo 20:2)

He is reminding them of what He has already done for them and saying, in effect, "I have done that for you; I can also enable you to do the ten items in this list should you so choose."

An interesting question answered on a separate page, is: "[can God command us to love Him?](https://characterofgod.org/command-to-love/)"(https://characterofgod.org/command-to-love/)

### Free Will

Some believe that, as far as our eternal destiny, we do not have a free will. There is a debate within Christianity that goes back centuries to two general theological views:

**Calvinism** (John Calvin) is the view that **God alone decides** who is saved and who is lost and that man's free will is not part of the process.

**Arminianism** (Jacobus Arminius) is the belief in free will—that our salvation is dependent upon **our individual choice** which God honors.

There is more to it than that, however, they obviously cannot both be true.

The two views of Calvinism and Arminianism can be summarized by acronyms used by each group:

<u><b>Calvinism</b></u>	<u><b>Arminianism</b></u>
<b>T</b> otal Depravity	<b>F</b> reed by Grace (to Believe)
<b>U</b> nconditional Election	<b>A</b> tonement for All
<b>L</b> imited Atonement	<b>C</b> onditional Election
<b>I</b> rresistible Grace	<b>T</b> otal Depravity
<b>P</b> erseverance of the Saints	<b>S</b> ecurity in Christ

This difference between the two theologies is well-explained by Dr. Timothy Jennings in a blog post:

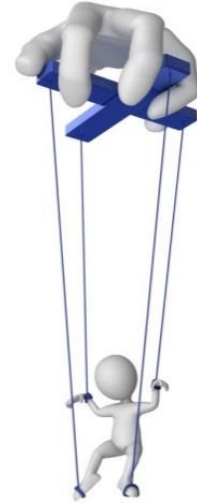
<https://comeandreason.com/free-will-or-predestination/>

Indeed, one of these views, if true, would destroy love. And that is why it really does make a difference which view we hold, because our beliefs change us—meaning we want to be lovers of the truth, for the truth always leads us to ever-increasing intimacy with Jesus, the source of all truth.

Understanding the real issues in this debate is about **God's law**, which is a direct manifestation of God's character.

**Imposed law** takes away freedom and destroys love. **Design law** is the basis of freedom and the manifestation of love.

Imposed law is the law of dictators.  
Design law is the law of our Creator.





## Verses Implying Free Will, Freedom of Choice

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live:" (Deut 30:19)

They were even invited, with no suggestion of coercion (understanding that any death or curses resulting from disobedience do not come from God), to make the right choice. What more could we expect from a God Who grants freedom of choice?

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this day** whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Josh 24:15)

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? **if the LORD be God, follow him**: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word." (1 Kings 18:21)

"As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols **[if that is your choice]** and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols." (Eze 20:39)

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, **Will ye also go away?**" (John 6:67)

## The Law of Liberty

"But whoso looketh into the perfect **law of liberty**, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25)

What does "law of liberty" imply about the connection between God's commandments or laws and free will?

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

# Condemnation

**Traditional Legal Model** – God condemns and has negative feelings towards sinners and will impose punishment on them if they don't make things right.

**Biblical Healing Model** – God does not condemn or have negative feelings towards sinners. His focus and efforts are always to heal and restore.

## A Modern Definition

**Condemnation** (noun)

- the act of condemning.
- the state of being condemned.
- strong censure; disapprobation; reproof.
- a cause or reason for condemning.
- ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Apr. 30, 2019)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Condemnation** (noun)

1. The act of condemning; the judicial act of declaring one guilty, and dooming him to punishment.

For the judgment was by one to condemnation Romans 5:16.

2. The state of being condemned.

Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation Luke 23:40.

3. The cause or reason of a sentence of condemnation John 3:19.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/condemnation>, accessed Apr. 30, 2019)

Here is another condemnation definition:

“The verdict [acquittal or guilt] indicates that the defendant is either free from or accountable to the law's penalty for that crime. Thus the result is either vindication or condemnation. Condemnation can refer either to the legal status of liability to punishment or to the actual infliction of that punishment. At times the word is also used in a broader context to refer to negative evaluations of a person by peers or by one's own conscience.” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/condemnation.html>)

I have no problem with that as a definition of how condemnation functions; the real question is: **“does God condemn or not?”**

To understand condemnation, I think it is important to recognize that condemnation (or acquittal) is the result of the process of judgment. If a person is condemned they have also been judged (in that case, as guilty). The two are closely connected.

See the glossary **definition for judgment** which includes a short video illustrating Jesus' non-judgmental, non-condemning attitude.

Now let's investigate in more detail God's role, if any, in the condemnation of sinners. Christians take comfort in this passage:

"For God **sent not his Son** into the world **to condemn** the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:17-19)

Non-believers might look at the "he that believeth not" section of verse 18 and say "that's me; God is **going to** condemn me." But look at it closely. Jesus was speaking in the present tense.

"He that believeth on him **is not condemned**"  
but  
"he that believeth not **is condemned already**"

When were those (alive in His day) who did not believe to be condemned? Not some time in the future; they were "condemned already." Does it say who the condemning was done by? No.

Here are more verses speaking of condemnation in the present tense:

"Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, **being condemned of himself.**"  
(Titus 3:11)

"For if **our heart condemn us**, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." (1 John 3:20)

Those verses indicate that it is not God Who is doing the condemning but the condemned person himself. Here is another verse relating condemnation to words spoken:

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and **by thy words** thou shalt be condemned." (Matt 12:37)

Those Jesus was talking to were condemned not by God's words but "by **thy words**" that is, by their own words.

If condemnation follows directly upon a guilty judgment and a person is self-condemned it follows that they must also be self-judged. Then, if God does not condemn, as shown above, it should follow that God does not judge either.

To see how this works read the page [Judged as You Judge](https://characterofgod.org/judge-not/). (https://characterofgod.org/judge-not/)

The next verses after John 3:19 cited above show the danger in ignoring opportunities to learn truth (light):

“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:20-21)

If a person ignores truth (will not come to the light) and convictions of their conscience in this life they will be faced with them in the judgment and will be self-condemned. “Why didn’t I ...”

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be good*, or whether *it be evil*.” (Eccl 12:14)

Note that it does not say who is doing the judging in that verse. God’s role is described in these verses:

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will **bring to light the hidden things of darkness**, and will **make manifest the counsels of the hearts**: and then shall every man have praise of God.” (1 Cor 4:5)

“**Every man’s work shall be made manifest**: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” (1 Cor 3:13)

He brings to light, to the awareness of each one involved, all secrets. If He is bringing it to light, He is already aware of it. He does not have to investigate to learn the facts:

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him** with whom we have to do.” (Heb 4:13)

The final judgment is for us, not for Him.

For a good example of the non-condemnation of God watch the first 3 minutes of this video:



(Control + click)

# Conscience

The meaning is similar between the two gospel models. The main and very important difference is how a clear conscience is achieved.

**Traditional Legal Model** – a clear conscience is achieved by having the record of our sins cleared by the payment of a penalty and understanding that God has forgiven us of them.

**Biblical Healing Model** – a clear conscience is achieved by making wrongs right, yes, but also by ceasing to do the wrongs that cause guilt and shame. Also, knowing that God unconditionally forgives all our sins, does not hold our past against us and wants to help us overcome.

## Definitions:

**"Conscience** (noun) - the inner sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action."  
([www.dictionary.com/browse/conscience](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/conscience))

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

"Internal or self-knowledge, or judgment of right and wrong; or the faculty, power or principle within us, which decides on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our own actions and affections, and instantly approves or condemns them."  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/conscience>)

The conscience, when activated, brings feelings of conviction to do or to not do something: "I should ...," "I should not ...," "I should have ...," "I should not have ...." We may feel a compulsion to change course before, during or after an action.

## Is a Good Conscience Possible?

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, **that I might not sin** against thee." (Psa 119:11)

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?"  
(Heb 9:14)

It seems that a clear conscience must be possible and it is a necessity to achieve true peace of mind.

## How is the Conscience Cleansed?

Here is one **misunderstanding** of how our consciences can be cleansed:

"This is an amazing promise! Christ cleansing our consciences from acts that lead to death!

How does he do it? By the blood of Christ, because on the cross he offered himself unblemished to God! He offered himself—his unblemished, perfect life—as a sacrifice to God for us on account of our sins. Therefore, he alone is able to cleanse our consciences through his blood."

(<https://unlockingthebible.org/2019/05/how-get-keep-good-conscience/>)

While that source rightly attributes cleansing to Christ's blood, the process is generally misunderstood. It has often been described as merely the blotting out of a record of sins) to cancel a debt we owe to God because of His need for appeasement.

While the quote speaks of "cleansing our consciences" it is described as a mere transaction ("on account of our sins") even though it says we are being cleansed from "acts." Rightly understood, the conscience is cleansed not by erasing a record but by dealing with the dead (evil) works so that the conscience can be clear.

We have all sinned in our past. God has forgiven us and wants us to stop sinning so that we are no longer hurting ourselves and others. We need to accept His forgiveness, forgive ourselves, right any wrongs with others, change some habits etc and then we will have a clean conscience.

## Paul's Conscience

It is interesting to read what Paul said about his conscience:

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1)

"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;" (2 Tim 1:3)

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." (Acts 24:16)

Did he never sin or make a mistake? I don't think he is saying that; Paul also wrote:

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

He was never knowingly living in rebellion to God. Even when persecuting Christians he understood himself to be doing God's will:

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 26:9)

That verse is a way of saying that Paul lived according to his conscience. Perhaps it was Paul's very active conscience and determination to follow it that made him the choice for the great work that God called him for.

## The Conscience of Non-believers

Do only believers have a conscience or an active conscience?

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of **the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness**, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;" (Rom 2:14-15)

The state of the conscience is closely connected to the thoughts. If the conscience says "guilty" the thoughts will be accusing. If the conscience sees no problem with the thoughts, words or action then there is no guilt felt.

The passage above speaks of "thoughts ... accusing." That would happen in response to a wrong action which shows the role of the conscience.

"Their thoughts" would be thoughts activated by their consciences. How can the Gentiles (at least some of them) have the law written in their hearts when God is proposing to write His law in the heart of His people implying it is not yet written there? Are there Gentiles who "have not the law" and yet are ahead of God's people in terms of having an appreciation of its principles? Is it possible that having the law in the heart is much more a matter of living by its principles than it is of knowing its details?

## Sin and Grace Abounding

This verse related to the conscience can seem confusing:

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

What is the relationship of that verse to the conscience? Where is the law entering? This expanded paraphrase may help (added words in red):



"Moreover **the requirements of** the law entered **the understanding of the conscience**, that the **awareness of** offence might abound **in a sensitive conscience**. But where **awareness of sin and its negative effects** abounded, **knowledge, appreciation and acceptance of** grace did much more abound:" (Rom 5:20, paraphrase)

God, of course, does not want offenses (sins) themselves to abound but, once committed, a greater awareness of them can be the means to show a person their spiritual need so that they will avail themselves of the freely-offered grace.

## Comparison with Physical Pain

Can you think of the one event in your life you would most like to have skipped? For many people it is an incident involving mental/emotional pain rather than physical pain.

It is said that emotional and physical pain are almost the same in their effects on your brain. However, emotional pain from an injured conscience can often be worse than physical pain. This is borne out by the fact that people will use physical pain as a distraction from emotional pain but not vice versa. Memories (certainly including those from the conscience) can trigger emotional pain but not physical pain.

Conscience	Pain
mental	physical
alerts re guilt of wrong action	alerts re physical injury or illness
prompts to correct behavior, confess	directs care to the injury or illness
can be masked with alcohol, attitude	can be masked with analgesic drugs

Both are involuntary - you can't just decide not to feel pain or to turn off a guilty conscience (although its functioning can be gradually decreased).

It is interesting that there is no mention in scripture of Christ's physical pain during the crucifixion but there is of His mental anguish.

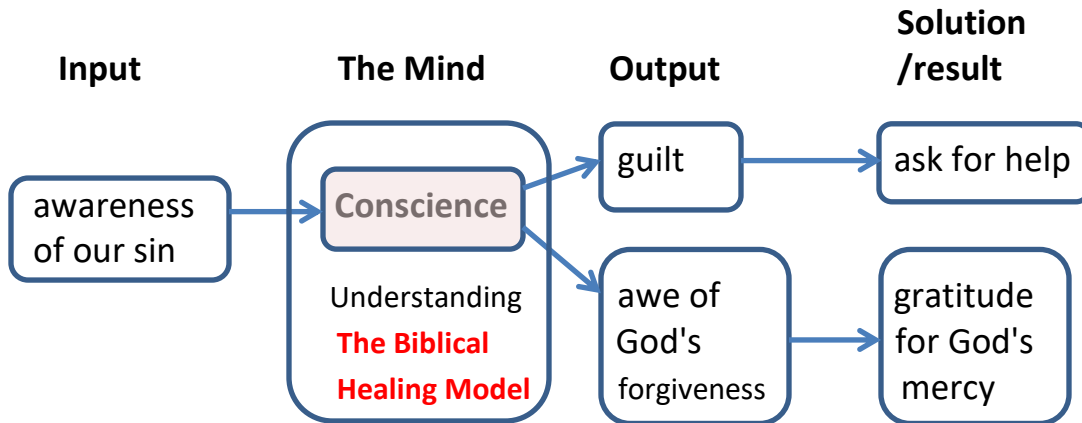
Scripture indicates that the record of our sins is in our minds (heart):

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;" (Jer 17:1)

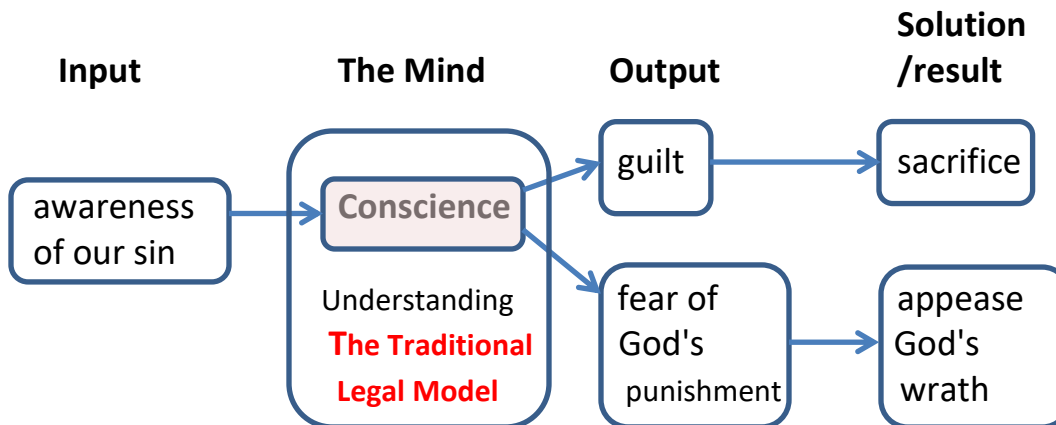
We should consider how our minds process knowledge of our sins.

## The Function of the Conscience in the Two Gospel Models

When one understands the Biblical Healing Model they realize that God does not require payment for sin and that **forgiveness is always freely given**. The conscience need not be bothered with continued guilt. Guilt is not a punishment; it is only meant to alert us to our need to find a solution to our sin. Here is a diagram of the conscience (a function of the mind) according to the Biblical Healing Model:



Compare that to the function of the conscience according to the Traditional Legal Model:



The solution to bring about atonement in the Traditional Legal Model is to offer a sacrifice to appease God's wrath. That sacrifice could be either an animal substitute or, after the cross, an acceptance of the sacrifice of God's Son on the sinner's behalf. In some belief systems, even with "human" sacrifice, some form of penance as payment on the part of the sinner was still required.

Another option is that the sinner does not even seek for a solution for his sin and guilt but continues in impenitence - a complete disregard for the problem. The result of that is this process:

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" (Rom 2:5)

Our conscience has been called a "moral muscle" implying that it is possible to exercise it or not. Think: "use it or lose it." To do nothing, to not seek for a resolution of guilt, results in it continuing. Even the ability to feel guilt (have an active conscience) is a faculty of the mind the function of which, if not used, decreases over time.

There is more discussion of the role of the conscience especially in the final judgment scene in the ebook [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](#).

(<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

## Consequence, natural\*

(supplemental term)

**Consequence** (noun): the effect, result, or outcome of something occurring earlier: The accident was the consequence of reckless driving. ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

God made laws according to His nature and how He designed creation to function. He does not assign **arbitrary** penalties for disobedience but there are natural or intrinsic consequences for every transgression of natural law. Those consequences apply to what we call **natural law** (gravity etc) but also to any breaking of God's law of love (acting selfishly) which ultimately leads, if not healed, to separation from God and thus death.

## Consumed

This study focusses on "consumed" translated from the Hebrew word "tamam" (H8552) because of its use in [Deuteronomy 2:15](https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/) (<https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/>). Note that there are other Hebrew words translated as "consumed."

**Traditional Legal Model:** Commonly thought to be the result of God's destructive work to punish His people or their enemies as seen in:

"For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were **consumed**." (Deut 2:15)

**Biblical Healing Model:** In this case, "consumed" is a reference to the point in time (note the word "until") when all the men of war that had rebelled at Kadesh (Num 14:22-23, 34) were deceased. It is simply a way of saying that the process of them dying off was finished or completed according to this definition:

Consumed is from H8552 תָּמַם *tamam taw-mam'*

a primitive root; v;

AV-consume 26, end 9, finished 4, clean 3, upright 3,  
spent 3, perfect 2, done 2, failed 2, accomplish 2, misc 8; 64

1) to be complete, be finished, be at an end

1a) (Qal)

**1a1) to be finished, be completed**

1a1a) completely, wholly, entirely (as auxiliary with verb)

1a2) to be finished, come to an end, cease

1a3) to be complete (of number)

1a4) to be consumed, be exhausted, be spent

1a5) to be finished, be consumed, be destroyed

- 1a6) to be complete, be sound, be unimpaired, be upright (ethically)
- 1a7) to complete, finish
- 1a8) to be completely crossed over

The common understanding, at least of its use in Deuteronomy 2:15, is shown by this commentary:

"His power was exerted in a way of wrath and vengeance on them, for their murmurings at the report of the spies; and therefore, it is no wonder they were **consumed**, for strong is his hand, and high is his right hand; and when lifted up it falls heavy, and there is no standing up under it, or against it: and thus, by one stroke after another, he went on to **destroy** them from among the host until they were **consumed ...**" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible on Deut 2:15)

However, here is another, quite different use of "tamam":

"And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had **finished** (H8552) **all the house**: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold." (1 Kings 6:22)

In that and many other uses, it means finished or completed - basically the opposite of destroyed. The Hebrew word "tamam" (H8552) is used 64 times in 62 verses and is translated as "consume" or "consumed" in 26 cases. At times, it is necessary to look at every use of a word to carefully determine what the Bible means or does not mean in its use. See all uses of "[tamam](https://characterofgod.org/consumed-all-uses/)." (<https://characterofgod.org/consumed-all-uses/>)

From that analysis, it can be seen that "tamam" refers to being physically destroyed or killed in only 9% of its uses and it is never used of a killing by God. There is no reason to understand "consumed" in Deuteronomy 2:15 to mean that generation of warriors was actively killed by God. Such would not be consistent with the meaning of other key words in [Deuteronomy 2:15](https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/) (<https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/>) nor with His forgiving, merciful character.

## Cross

The cross (the crucifixion) is viewed as a symbol of suffering for sin and of victory over sin. But will we ever fully understand that event which has so much meaning to it? There are quite different ways to understand it.

**Traditional Legal Model** – the cross was where God's wrath against sin was satisfied in the sacrifice of His Son to pay the legal penalty of sin thus satisfying Divine justice and allowing God to then forgive sin.

**Biblical Healing Model** – the cross was the ultimate event showing the ongoing suffering of God because of man's sin and the results of sin. It also demonstrated the magnitude of the love of God and the extent to which God will allow mankind to make their own decisions. And more.

The term “the cross” is often used as a reference to Jesus' death on the cross. Here is one explanation reflecting the common (but not that of this website) view:

“One might ask why Jesus had to die in the first place. ... due to the temptations of Satan (the serpent), Adam and Eve sinned and fell from God's grace. Furthermore, they have passed the **curse** of sin on to their children so that everyone inherits their **sin** and **guilt**. God the Father sent his one and only Son into the world to take on human flesh and to be the Savior of His people. Born of a virgin, Jesus avoided the curse of the fall that infects all other human beings. As the sinless Son of God, He could provide the unblemished **sacrifice** that God requires. God's **justice** demanded **judgment** and **punishment** for sin; God's love moved Him to send His one and only Son to be the **propitiation** for sin.” (<https://www.gotquestions.org/meaning-of-the-cross.html>)  
(See definitions for the bolded words above.)

There is so much wrong with that description. I am not meaning to pick on gotquestions.org; this is just one example typical of many. Follow the links in that paragraph for more on the meaning of those terms in relation to the character of God. We will look in more detail at just a few points as we focus on the meaning of the cross.

Here is an example of wrong thinking about the cross in Christian music:

### In Christ Alone Lyrics:

Till on that cross as Jesus died  
**The wrath of God was satisfied**  
 For every sin on Him was laid  
 Here in the death of Christ I live

The Presbyterian church wrote to the author of the song and asked if it could be changed to “The love of God was magnified” which would be much more appropriate. The response was a definite “no,” reflecting very Calvinistic thinking.

## Verses Speaking About the Literal Cross

There are eleven verses speaking about the literal cross such as:

“And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his **cross**.” (Matt 27:32)

## The Cross as a Symbol of One’s Burden

There are six verses about taking up one’s cross after Jesus’ example. Here is one.

“And he that taketh not his **cross**, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” (Matt 10:38)

In each case, it is Jesus speaking, indicating that His definition of the cross is self denial and self sacrifice.

Paul speaks of himself and our need to also take up our figurative cross:

“Knowing this, that our old man is **crucified** with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom 6:6)

“I am **crucified** with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20)

“And they that are Christ’s have **crucified** the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Gal 5:24)

## The Cross and Reconciliation

The Bible speaks of (the sacrifice of) the cross as a means of reconciliation. Notice how “the cross” can be equated to “the death.”

“And that he might **reconcile both unto God** in one body **by the cross**, having slain the enmity thereby:” (Eph 2:16)

“For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be **saved by his life**.” (Rom 5:10)

Romans 5:10 makes a distinction between reconciliation and salvation. We are "**reconciled to God**;" we no longer have enmity (Romans 8:7) against God, because of our understanding of Jesus' death. Also, we are being "**saved by His life**" – being spiritually healed through His work in us and by seeing the example of His life which works a change in us:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

It is important to understand who is being reconciled to who by the death of Christ. In the two verses above and this passage it is we who are reconciled to God.

"And all things are of God, who hath **reconciled us to himself** by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling the world unto himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5:18-19)

The Bible never mentions God being reconciled to us. There is no need for a reconciliation in that direction; no need for any change on God's part towards us. He always loves us and is ever-merciful. That is much different than the **Traditional Legal Model** which requires a blood sacrifice and death in order to have sins forgiven. This verse may naturally come to mind:

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb 9:22)

It is discussed in detail on its own page – [Hebrews 9:22](https://characterofgod.org/hebrews-9-22-shedding-blood/)  
(<https://characterofgod.org/hebrews-9-22-shedding-blood/>)

## The All-Important Cross

The cross was all-important to Paul:

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the **cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal 6:14)

Paul gloried in the cross by personally dwelling on Christ's sacrificial death and by making that very prominent in his teaching and preaching:

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him **crucified**." (1 Cor 2:2)

It is interesting that he wrote this after his time sharing in Athens where his success was more limited with the Greeks who were much more logical, analytical thinkers.



## The Eternal Cross

As soon as there was sin there was a Savior:

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb [planned to be] slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev 13:8)

Even in anticipation, Jesus would have suffered from the beginning of sin. His suffering was largely due to the sympathy He had for His suffering children since sin entered as in these verses:

“In all their **affliction he was afflicted**, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” (Isa 63:9)

“And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and **his soul was grieved** for the misery of Israel.” (Jud 10:16)

We identify the suffering mostly with the event of the cross itself:

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2)

However, and since that suffering had such a large mental and emotional component to it, the pain in His heart continues to this day in reaction to every sin and act of violence:

“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing **they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh**, and put him to an open shame.” (Heb 6:6)

Christ’s (along with His Father’s) greatest cross is yet to come – at the end of the millennium when all the lost will come to an end. Even beyond the end of sin, there will be a reminder:

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” (Zech 13:6)

In the future, some who are saved (perhaps who lived long before the cross) and never heard about the cross will only learn of it and its significance in heaven.

## Effects of Beholding the Cross

I watched the movie **The Passion of the Christ** (Mel Gibson, 2004) – it did not make me feel especially loving. My understanding at that time was more of the **Traditional Legal Model**. Many people watching that would likely be led to think that God is extremely bloodthirsty or to ask “is that God’s justice?” Really?

It is important to remember that the cross is not about a legal punishment. What it does show is the love of God in how far He was willing to go to convince us of His love and forgiveness.

We should recognize also, as we share with others, that the story of the cross has a drawing power. As we lift up the cross, explaining it in a relational rather than a legal framework, it will have a drawing power.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”  
(John 12:32)

# Curse

**Traditional Legal Model** – Curses are actively and directly caused by God as punishment for sins.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Curses are natural consequence of man's choices to depart from God thus forfeiting His protection.



## Definition

- a formula or charm intended to cause such misfortune to another.
- the expression of a wish that misfortune, evil, doom, etc., befall a person, group, etc.
- the act of reciting such a formula.

(from [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

**Webster's 1828 Dictionary** definitions are similar.

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." (Jer 17:5)

Note that the first action in the verse above is man choosing to trust other men and to depart from God. The result (and perhaps it is only a natural result) is a curse – a bad result because the trust is in man whose knowledge is inferior to God's. If you have poor advisors you will get poor advice. The question is whether the curse in this and other cases is imposed by God or a natural consequence. Read how **God's law** protects us from the consequences of sin and how a **breach** in the law (us breaking it) gives Satan [opportunity to afflict us](https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>)

That passage in Jeremiah sounds very much like the exact opposite of this:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Pro 3:5-6)

Trust in God and He will guide you. Choose not to trust Him and He will honor your free-will choice to not have His direction.

Let's look at the first occurrence of a curse upon mankind.

## The Earth Cursed

Let's look at the first occurrence of a curse upon mankind:

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed** *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;" (Gen 3:17)

Was that curse something God imposed on the Earth or was it a natural result of what Adam did? Many versions state it as a consequence of Adam actions:

- "... **the ground is cursed because of you** ..." (NASB, NIV, NLT, Christian Standard Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible)
- "... **Earth is cursed because of you** ..." (Aramaic Bible in Plain English)
- "... **the ground will be under a curse because of what you did** ..." (Contemporary English Version)
- "... **Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse** ..." (Good News Translation)
- "... **cursed is the ground on your account** ..." (Literal Standard Version)
- "... **cursed is the ground thanks to you** ..." (NET Bible)

So, the first curse on man or the earth appears to be a result of what man did; it was not imposed by God.

## The Curse of God's Absence

While not using the word "curse," this passage points to what amounts to a curse:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and **many evils and troubles shall befall them**; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, **because our God is not among us**? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods." (Deut 31:16-18)

It was foretold that the people would even recognize that the evils and troubles (curses) were upon them due to God's absence.

## Can Curses be Inherited?

“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children**, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*.” (Exo 34:6-7)

A study of “**visit**” shows that to visit means to allow the natural consequences of actions, whether good or bad, to occur. That is consistent with this verse:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal 6:7)

What is passed on? – the effects (both genetic and societal) of what we do. This possibility of passing on traits to our offspring can also be (and was meant to be) for a blessing but many have turned it into a curse, a negative effect due to their choices.

## Deuteronomy’s Curses and Blessings

“And it shall come to pass, **if thou shalt hearken diligently** unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all **these blessings shall come on thee**, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.” (Deut 28:1-2)

Verses 3-14 list a number of blessings and then verse 15 says:

“But it shall come to pass, **if thou wilt not hearken** unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all **these curses shall come upon thee**, and overtake thee:” (Deut 28:15)

Note that God says “these curses **shall come upon thee**” not “**I will put these curses upon thee**.”

## The End-time Curse

“Therefore hath **the curse devoured the earth**, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.” (Isa 24:6)

“Therefore” points to a reason for the curse which is given in the previous verse:

“The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.” (Isa 24:5)

For every blessing (good result) or curse (bad result) there is a reason:

“As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so **the curse causeless shall not come.**” (Pro 26:2)

Even cases where it really sounds like God is sending a curse, we can understand it as [Him taking responsibility](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/) for allowing or permitting the curse or the consequences and He does that because he honors our free will.

Here are some detailed studies of examples of curses in the Bible (watch for future pages):

- The curse on Noah’s grandson Canaan
- The curse on Achan
- The curse on the fig tree

# Destroy/destruction

This page deals with what it means to destroy especially as it applies to God and includes “destruction” – the result of that action. See **the destroyer definition** for who the destroyer is.

**Traditional Legal Model** – While God is a God of love, to satisfy justice and for the good of man, He, at times, has to personally and directly destroy unrepentant sinners.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Yes, God does destroy as the Bible plainly says He does, but He destroys in the sense of not restraining or preventing the natural consequences of man’s choice and actions from occurring.

**Definitions** for “destroy” and “destruction” are virtually the same between modern dictionaries and the 1828 Webster’s Dictionary.

## To Destroy Does Not Always Mean to Kill

To be clear, when the Bible speaks of people being destroyed it is not always meaning that they were killed

“And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and **destroyed** you in Seir, *even* unto Hormah.” (Deut 1:44)

God is talking in that verse to Israel. Yet it says they were destroyed. To destroy obviously does not always mean to kill or God wouldn’t be talking to them.

## Who Moved?

As pointed out in the definition of “**the destroyer**,” God’s default role is to act as a protector. If people are under God’s protection at one time and then they are not, what changed, who initiated a change, who moved? Did God move away or remove his protection and, if so, why would He do that? Or did the people move out of or away from God’s protection? Here is a verse that describes this in general terms in regard to Israel:

“O Israel, thou hast **destroyed thyself**; but in me *is* thine help.” (Hosea 13:9)

In the case of Israel, this puts the blame where it belongs. We will look at some obviously-destructive events in scripture to show how destruction, commonly attributed to God, happens. In some of the most obvious examples, warning was given and the destruction could have been averted. In those examples, we can look at who could have “moved” to avoid the destruction.

## The Flood

“And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” (Gen 6:7)

“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Gen 6:13)

Recently, I received a comment on one of my posts related to this topic saying:

“... I have also noticed that instead of reading the Bible for what it really says, there is a tendency of reading thoughts and ideas into it. ...”

The commenter was urging me to understand the words “I will destroy” literally. The problem is that the commenter is only reading the verse for what it says, rather than reading the Bible for what it says. The Bible also says:

- “... God is love.” (1 John 4:8)
- “... Love your enemies ...” (Matt 5:44)
- “... do good to them that hate you ...” (Matt 5:44)
- “The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish ...” (2 Peter 3:9)
- “... every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt 4:4)
- “... neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” (Isa 55:8)

So the commenter is reading into the Bible thoughts that, while they are actually expressed in literal words, may not be intended to be understood literally. Aside from the clues listed above, there are idiomatic forms in the Greek and Hebrew languages that must be taken into account. This is especially true of the principle that God is often said to do that which He merely permitted or allowed (<https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/>) of which there are numerous examples in scripture. (<https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/>) Since there are so many factors influencing the meaning of the word “destroy” we need to allow the Bible to define its own terms. Had God directly destroyed the world there would be some serious contradictions with the verses in the list above. So we need to look for more clues from the Bible about the meaning of “destroy” when used in connection with God. Here is one connected to the flood:

“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?” (Job 22:15-17)



The suggestion is that God could not do anything for them because they wanted nothing to do with Him and He respects free choice. Listen to the audio part 4 [here](https://characterofgod.org/servant-god/) (<https://characterofgod.org/servant-god/>) of an excellent discussion **What's Love Got to Do with It?**

This verse is very important in understanding the reasons for the flood:

“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Gen 6:13)

Notice that “the end of all flesh” had “come before” God. In other words, He could see it coming. “The end of all flesh was coming” “for” or because the earth was “filled with violence.” The people had become so violent that the human race was headed towards its end, towards extinction.

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” (Gen 6:3)

Most versions suggest 120 years was to be the new maximum lifespan yet this was before Abraham who lived to the age of 175 and Noah himself lived to 950 years. In fact, Methuselah who died at age 969 was still alive when the message was given.

Why would God, when talking about striving with man to change his violent ways, suddenly switch to talking about his lifespan (which would be irrelevant anyway if man, through violence, was exterminating himself?) Clearly, God was referring to the time He would plead with them (largely through the witness of righteous Noah) to change their ways and avert the flood.

In holding off the flood for all those years, warning of the coming flood, striving with man to change his ways and providing an ark of safety God was offering protection from the flood. Man chose to “leave” God’s protection by saying to Him “depart from us” and by not getting on the ark. It does not make sense that God would do so much to save from a natural disaster only to personally administer its effects to kill people.

## Sodom and Gomorrah

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” (Gen 13:10)

“For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us [angels] to destroy it.” (Gen 19:13)

Right away the question arises – did God Himself personally destroy Sodom and Gomorrah or did angels? This suggests there may be something else going on.

The threatened destruction looked something like this:



There was fire and brimstone ready to fall on Sodom and the other cities. Was there a possible escape from that threat? What move could have been made to escape destruction? The obvious escape would have been to leave the city as Lot and his family did and as was offered to Lot's sons-in-law (Gen 19:14) But was there another "move" that could have been made? There is a strong suggestion in Abraham's conversation with the Lord that even a few people repenting and turning to righteousness would have spared the whole city. Abraham pled with the Lord asking if Sodom could be spared if there were even fifty righteous people there. The Bible account has Abraham bargaining for the city to be saved if fewer and yet fewer righteous were found. Here is his last plea:

"And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake."  
(Gen 18:32)

One wonders what would have happened if Abraham had bargained further. So the destruction of the cities could have been avoided if even a small number of the people there had "moved" by turning to God.

God's feelings at the loss of Sodom and the other cities of the plain are reflected by this verse:

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah how shall I set thee as Zeboim mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." (Hosea 11:8)

God was very sorry for how things turned out in those cities and it pained Him greatly to have to simply deliver them up to destruction because of their rejection of Him.

In one description of the destruction that followed notice that it is described as "vengeance" but that vengeance is described as being a result of eternal fire.

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” (Jude 1:7)

Another clue suggests one mechanism that may have played at least a part in how the destruction occurred:

*“And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath.”* (Deut 29:23)

That verse could certainly be seen to support that God actively destroyed the cities but the use of “anger” and “wrath” in connection with God’s actions needs to be understood according to the Biblical definition of those terms, not ours. See how the wrath of God mentioned in Rom 1:18 is manifested in Rom 1:24, 26 and 28 and also the **definition of wrath** and the many [examples of God’s wrath](https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) So the mechanism suggested is that God “left” only in the sense of honoring the free-will choice of man to reject Him.

## Nineveh

“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be **overthrown** (Strong’s H2015).” (Jonah 3:4)

In that verse, the term “overthrown” is used but that same original word was used to describe the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah:

“And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow (H2015) this city, for the which thou hast spoken.” (Gen 19:21)

“And he overthrew (H2015) those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” (Gen 19:25)

“And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow (H2018, noun form of H2015), when he overthrew (H2015) the cities in the which Lot dwelt.” (Gen 19:29)

Obviously, the threatened overthrow of Nineveh was a reference to destruction. As Jonah entered Nineveh it was under threat of destruction. It was not destroyed so we could ask: “what changed” or “who moved?” It was the people of Nineveh, not by leaving the city, but by repenting that allowed God to continue to protect the city.

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.” (Jonah 3:5)

What God did not do was to remove His protection and allow Satan to destroy the city.

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.” (Jonah 3:10)

The evil He said He would do would not have been done by Him even if it did happen. God saying He would do what He only permitted to happen is a very [common idiomatic expression](https://characterofgod.org/i-create-evil/) (https://characterofgod.org/i-create-evil/) in the Hebrew. Really, it is saying that because of their repentance He did not allow the destruction to happen.

## Job

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.” (Job 2:3)

This story is a little different in that God did remove His protection by allowing

Satan to destroy much of Job’s family and possessions. Reading the accounts of the meetings in heaven shows that this was a special challenge brought by Satan against Job and God Himself.

God was not responsible for the destruction even though Job’s servants, his friends and even Job himself understood it that way.

## Summary

So, in the stories of Noah’s flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh and Job we see that God did not destroy; He did not cause destruction. His role is always to protect but He will always honor free will even if people reject Him.

# Destroyer

**Note:** this page is focused more on who the destroyer is in scripture.

**Traditional Legal Model** – The destroyer is Satan at times and God is at other times in order to maintain His justice.

**Biblical Healing Model** – The destroyer is always Satan. God only destroys in the sense that He allows it to happen.

## From a Modern Dictionary

**Destroyer** (noun)  
a person or thing that destroys.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Destroyer**, (noun)  
One who destroys, or lays waste; one who kills a man, or an animal, or who ruins a country, cities, etc.  
([www.webstersdictionary1828.com](http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com))

The “destroyer” (with the definite article) would be the one who destroys and actually has the habit of destroying as a feature of his character, his identity. Whether God ever destroys or not, destruction is not an identifying feature we would attribute to Him – God is certainly not the destroyer as we understand the act of destroying. There is another power, quite separate from God, who acts like this:

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Note how Jesus makes a pointed contrast between Himself and the one causing destruction. Let's look for more distinctions between God and the destroyer in scripture.

## The Destroyer at the Passover

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to **destroy** you, when I smite (nakah, Strong's H5221) the land of Egypt.” (Exo 12:13)

In the Septuagint (or LXX, the third century BC Greek translation of the Old Testament), the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew “nakah” is “paio” (Strong’s G3817). Another Greek word “patasso” (G3960, derived from “paio”) was used in the New Testament to describe the act of the angel who “[smote Peter on the side](https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/)” (https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) (Acts 12:7) to awaken him. As in that case, Egypt was “**smitten**” (actually ten times) in the hope of getting their attention enough to repent and turn towards the true God. Unfortunately, Pharaoh **hardened** his heart but that was an act of his own free will despite God’s attempts to move him in the other direction.

It was the land of Egypt that was to be smitten and, since Israel was living in Egypt, they were apparently in danger also. God gave instructions for their protection:

“For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite (nagaph, H5062) *you*.” (Exo 12:23)

Think about that verse and the idea that God was doing the destroying. Does it make sense that God was preventing Himself from acting as the destroyer? Doesn’t it sound like the destroyer is someone else? Note that the “smite” of verse 23 is a different Hebrew word than in verse 13. God was “smiting” as the angel did with Peter, to get attention, hopefully to save; the destroyer was smiting to kill. Note this verse:

“And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.” (Exo 10:3)

In mercy, God called ten times for humbleness and repentance. He did all He could to save Egypt from the destroyer.

## The Murmurers Destroyed

“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were **destroyed** of the **destroyer**.” (1 Cor. 10:10).

Read a discussion of [who the murmurers were](https://characterofgod.org/numbers-16-korahs-rebellion/) (https://characterofgod.org/numbers-16-korahs-rebellion/) and what happened to them.

## The Destroyer in Psalms

“Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not. (Psa 17:4-5)

By observing God's words, David kept himself from the ways of sin. He did not keep himself from God by observing God's word. That would make no sense. David is contrasting "the paths of the destroyer" with "thy [God's] paths." The word "destroyer" in that verse is a different Hebrew word ("pereets," H6530) than in Exo 12:23 ("shachath," H7843) and would seem to mean more like violent men than Satan as the destroyer.

## The Destroyer in Revelation

John refers to the destroyer using the Hebrew and the Greek names meaning "Destroyer":

"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is **Abaddon**, but in the Greek tongue hath his name **Apollyon**" (Rev 9:11).

"The angel of the bottomless pit" is associated with Satan in scripture.

## The Destroyer in Job

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." (Job 2:3)

There is a suggestion here that God was destroying in the case of Job. At this point in the account of Job, much of what Job valued – family and possessions – had been destroyed. But the background shows that Satan had made accusations against both God and Job:

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." (Job 1:9-11)

For the benefit of the understanding of all the world, a test was allowed which, in the end, helped to demonstrate who it is that acts as the destroyer. Satan was allowed to afflict Job:

"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD." (Job 1:12)

The rest of chapter one details what Satan did to Job and then describes the second meeting between Satan and God:

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.” (Job 2:3)

In that verse, God said that Satan “moved” (the original word is often translated as “persuade”) Him to destroy Job. But we know from the details given that the whole thing was Satan’s idea and Satan was the cause of the destruction. This is one example of many where God is [said to do what He only allowed or permitted](#) (<https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/>). It is clear from the story of Job that Satan is the destroyer who also does all he can to cast the blame on God. God did not destroy in the case of Job, He simply did not prevent Satan’s work of destruction.

## God is Not the Destroyer

God’s role is just the opposite of the destroyer. He protects while the Bible identifies Satan as the destroyer. Yet the Bible does, at times, speak of God destroying so we want to sort that out. It could almost seem like God is the protector until some point is reached and then, all of a sudden, He switches roles, acts totally contrary to His previous actions and dishes out destruction.

How God is prevented from protecting even though He wants to is made clear in [this illustration](#) (<https://characterofgod.org/how-god-destroys/>) by [F. T. Wright](#) (<https://characterofgod.org/fred-wright/>).

See the definition page for **destroy/destruction** for further discussion.



# Discomfited

Discomfited - the definition according to two gospel models:

**Traditional Legal Model** - God's action to destroy or at least aid in destroying the enemies of Israel.

**Biblical Healing Model** - God's last-minute appeal to the conscience to turn to Him.

**Modern Dictionary** (dictionary.com)

**Discomfit** - verb (used with object)

to confuse and deject; disconcert: to be discomfited by a question.

to frustrate the plans of; thwart; foil.

Archaic. to defeat utterly; rout: The army was discomfited in every battle.

**Webster's 1828 Dictionary** (webstersdictionary1828.com)

**Discomfit** - verb

To rout; to defeat; to scatter in fight; to cause to flee; to vanquish.

**Oxford:** (www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com)

**Discomfit** - verb

to make somebody feel confused or embarrassed

It could be related to our word "discomfort" or maybe to that funny word "discombobulate." Here is an example of the use of the original word, in this verse of the KJV, translated as "destroy:"

"For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to **destroy** them from among the host, until they were consumed." (Deut 2:15)

That verse (discussed in detail [here](https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/): <https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/>) reads as though God is destroying them but is that the true meaning; the Biblical definition of the original word?

"Discomfited" in the Bible, is translated from several different Hebrew words. However, in the verse above where it is given as "destroyed" and in all cases where God is indicated as doing it, the original word is "hamam" (H2000).

Here is one verse using discomfited that obviously involved physical force:

"And Joshua **discomfited** Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." (Exo 17:13)

However, that is not describing an action by God and it is using a different original Hebrew word. From this point, we will focus on cases of discomfiting connected to God and using the Hebrew word "hamam" - the word we are trying to define.

## Discomfited Not the Same as Destroyed

Does "discomfited" (from "hamam") as performed by God always (or ever) mean to destroy as in to kill? Let's consider some examples:

"And the LORD discomfited (H2000) Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet." (Jud 4:15)

Sisera couldn't have fled away if discomfited there meant to be killed. That should be a clue to cause us to look more closely.

"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and **troubled** (H2000) the host of the Egyptians." (Exo 14:24)

Does "troubled" mean destroyed in that case? No, it was the returning waters that drowned them. Did God send the water? No, He just stopped holding it up on both sides for Israel who were trusting in Him to pass through. God did not submerge the Egyptians (who did not trust in Him), gravity did. (But that is another subject.)

"And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did **vex** (H2000) them with all adversity." (2 Chron 15:6)

Who destroyed them? They destroyed (from a different word) each other - "nation ... of nation" and "city of city." God only "vexed" them. The question is what does that mean and how did God do it?

## Discomfiture Means Confusion

"And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, **every man's sword was against his fellow**, *and there was a very great* **discomfiture** (H4103)." (1 Sam 14:20)

Many versions have "confusion" rather than discomfiture. For example:

"Then Saul and all the people who *were* with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow *Philistine*, *and there was very great* **confusion**." (1 Sam 14:20, NASB)

Something unusual and significant would have to be going on to cause enough confusion for Philistine soldiers to start turning on each other with their swords. While "discomfiture" is from a different Hebrew word in this case, it helps to see that the confusion is separate from the physical fighting with swords.

In the case of discomfiture resulting from something sent by God, it is a very interesting form of confusion.

## Discomfiture by Hornets

Here is a clue as to what is happening in some of these cases:

"I will send my **fear** before thee, and will **destroy** (H2000 = "discomfited") all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I **will send hornets** before thee, which shall **drive out** the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." (Exo 23:27-28)

You don't need to drive out people who are literally destroyed or killed. Also, a few verses later we are told:

"... for I will **deliver** the inhabitants of the land **into your hand**; and **thou shalt drive them out** before thee." (Exo 23:31)

It seems the "hornets" played a part but the Israelites actually drove them out. Please see the **definition for hornets** a possible symbolic meaning to that term. From that Biblical definition of hornets it can be seen that "hornets," can represent a call to the conscience. And so, it seems that, in Exodus 23, God is not killing Israel's enemies but appealing to their consciences which of course, would be to get them to change and repent.

## Discomfiture by Arrows

Another symbol used in connection with the conscience is that of arrows. They were so used in connection with King David:

"For thine **arrows** stick fast in me, and **thy hand (H3027) presseth me sore.**" (Psa 38:2)

See the **definition for arrows** which shows that they often (as hornets do) refer to calls to the conscience. On that page it is shown that "lightning" is used in the same way.

## Discomfiture by Pricks

Consistent with both "hornets" and "arrows," "pricks" also penetrate or pierce and do so metaphorically to the conscience.

Saul's conscience was smitten:

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the **pricks**.*" (Acts 9:5)

The "pricks" (goads) were his conscience smitting him, telling him to change course.

"Pricks" is from:

2759 κέντρον kentron ken'-tron  
from kenteo (to prick);  
AV-sting 3, prick 2; 5

- 1) a sting, as that of bees, scorpions, locusts. Since animals wound by their sting and even cause death, Paul attributes death, personified as a sting, i.e. a deadly weapon
- 2) an iron goad, for urging on oxen, horses and other beasts of burden
- 2a) hence the proverb, "to kick against the goad," i.e. to offer vain and perilous or ruinous resistance

The connection to bees or hornets can be seen in that definition. The e-Sword software mentions that this word means figuratively "divine impulse."

Peter's Pentecost message pricked many a conscience:

"Now when they heard *this*, they were **pricked in their heart**, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

When they heard what?

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, **whom ye have crucified**, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)

There was the discomfiture; the troubling of the mind over past actions. The solution to those pricks was repentance and baptism (v38) with those responding positively to their consciences being saved:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41)

That is a very obvious connection to the conscience. There would have been plenty of guilt feelings and affliction of conscience there.

## Smiting to Discomfit

There are cases where to smite (when done by God) refers to a call to the conscience to repent. A very good example is the case of [King Herod](https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) (https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) which only a surface-reader would understand to be a case of God killing. In the Old Testament as well, there are good examples such as:

"In vain have I **smitten** your children; they received no **correction**: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion." (Jer 2:30)

See the definition for "**smote**." for more evidence of an appeal to the conscience.

## Summary

We can see that "discomfit" often refers to the state of mind resulting from a call to the conscience that has gone unheeded. That is important to a correct understanding of [Deuteronomy 2:15](https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/). (https://characterofgod.org/deuteronomy-2-15/)

All the words - arrows, hornets, lightning, pricks and smite - referred to earlier on this page, point to that meaning. And there are likely others. Remember, God is out to save, not destroy.

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village." (Luke 9:56)

He will make many appeals to the conscience. He will use whatever means He can, consistent with His character, to awaken people to their spiritual danger. Likely, dear reader, you have felt some of those appeals yourself.

And in a life-or-death situation (such as when going into battle) God is most likely to make a last-minute appeal to the conscience. The evidence shows that in situations where Israel's enemies were discomfited (using the meaning scripture gives) resulting in confusion and defeat in battle that was often the situation. If any were lost in the fighting but at the last minute turned to God then victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat.

This understanding of the Biblical meaning of discomfit is critical to understanding such key verses as Deuteronomy 2:15.

# Dominion

**Dominion definition** - in the Bible, who has dominion of the earth? Who should have it? Is it going to change?

**Traditional Legal Model:** While man was given dominion over the plants and animals, since God is all-powerful and created this earth, He has ultimate control over it and can be said to be responsible for “acts of God.”

**Biblical Healing Model:** God gave dominion of the Earth to man but man switched allegiance to Satan so that Satan now has dominion of the Earth and its inhabitants and can exercise control in a greater degree than many realize. And that control is in proportion to man’s wickedness. Thus, we see storms and floods and all kinds of disasters.

## The Meaning of Dominion

**Dominion (noun)**

the power or right of governing and controlling; sovereign authority.  
rule; control; domination. ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

The question here is not so much any difference in meaning of the word but, rather, who has dominion and what responsibility is associated with it.

We have dominion over our children while they are young and, during that time, they tend to take on our characters by copying our behavior; we “rub off on them.” It would be meaningless for God to have given man dominion over anything if man could have no effect on it. We have an effect on what we have dominion over - for good (blessing) or bad (cursing) depending on how we exercise it.

A king exercises dominion over his subjects either by dominance (employing force and threats thereof) or by kindness (engendering loyalty) and leadership (being an example). A king with true sovereignty can do whatever he wants but his actions are not free of consequences.

## Dominion Definition – Dominion Granted

God chose to allow man freedom to manage the Earth as he saw fit. Man was to manage the earth and its creatures in service to God, the Owner and in obedience to God’s principles. God gave dominion (or management) of the Earth (and of themselves) to Adam and Eve:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen 1:28)

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Gen 2:15)

This was done by God in honor of the principle of freedom and to be a blessing to man and the lesser creatures. The word “subdue” doesn’t have to imply violence or mistreatment. It can mean “to bring under cultivation.”

## Dominion Definition – Dominion Lost

Man originally had dominion of the earth but, at the fall, he essentially switched masters:

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16)



“... for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.” (2 Peter 2:19)

Because man was brought into bondage under Satan, what man had domain over also came under Satan. Now, instead of doing things under God’s direction, mankind was much more subject to the influence of Satan. Since the fall, Satan has been interfering in the management of the Earth by influencing man away from obedience to God. The more man disobeys God the more Satan can influence the Earth.

Mankind’s sin and loss of dominion came with many consequences:

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it:

cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen 3:17-19)

Most versions say “... cursed is the ground because of you ...” meaning as a result of what man had done, not as an arbitrary punishment. This also indicates that more than the plants and animals were originally under Adam’s dominion.

It is interesting to compare what God said at the two times when the earth was in need of being filled with life:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them,  
**Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,**  
 and **subdue it: and have dominion over**  
**...fish ... fowl ... every living thing that moveth upon the earth.**” (Genesis 1:28)

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them,  
**Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.** And  
**the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon**  
**fowl ... all that moveth upon the earth ... fishes ...**” (Genesis 9:1-2)

The obvious change is that, after the flood, man did not have dominion, having lost it much earlier. The animals were no longer willing subjects and, instead, were afraid of man. Since the fall, man no longer had the degree of dominion he once did over the animals or the earth itself. He has been able to subjugate some animals for service only by taming them essentially through bribery (feeding them) or by coercion (the whip).

## Who Now Has Dominion?

Many verses point to Satan now having the dominion of this world:

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall **the prince of this world** be cast out.”  
 (John 12:31)

“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for **the prince of this world** cometh, and hath nothing in me.” (John 14:30)

“Of judgment, because **the prince of this world** is judged.” (John 16:11)



“In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Cor 4:4)

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:” (Eph 2:2)

Jesus, in effect, confirmed this in the temptation in the wilderness. He didn’t dispute Satan’s claim that all the Kingdoms of the world were Satan’s, but still refused to worship him.

“And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for **that is delivered unto me**; and to whomsoever I will I give it. (Luke 4:5-6)

“Delivered” to him by who previously had it, namely Adam.

## Rebellion Reflected in the Dominion

When man rebelled against God, that attitude of rebellion had an effect upon and was inherited by that which man had dominion over – the animals and even the earth itself. This is shown by:

“And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand;” (Gen 4:10-11)

A similar verse shows how the earth is damaged as a result of sin:

“And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.” (Lev 18:25)

“I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it” means allowing circumstances that result from the sinful practises to take place in accord with the principles of reaping what is sown. This is shown in the glossary word study for **visit**. Also, see the definition of “**curse**” for what brings a curse to the earth.

## God's Role ("Acts of God")

God's role is described:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and **by him all things consist.**" (Col 1:16-17)

"Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things** by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" (Heb 1:3)

My understanding is that this is a reference to His upholding the laws of nature. God maintains the laws which govern nature and all life and those laws produce the natural results of all actions.

## God is Not the Manager Down Here

The fact that God does not exercise dominion (day-to-day management) of the Earth absolves Him of responsibility for "acts of God." Through Adam's sin and our continued rejection of and disobedience to God, we have walked away from His protection and that is the cause, along with Satan's workings, of troubles on Earth. This can be illustrated as follows with the law represented as a hedge of protection for man:



God's Protection  
Law as a hedge



Our Rebellion  
Rejecting the law



Unprotected  
Consequences

In much the same way that God allows evil people to commit evil acts and receive the inherent consequences, God allows the earth to reflect the consequences sin has had on creation. But the earth is also designed to return the blessings of obedience:

“And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.” (Deut 28:2-4)

That was God’s intent, that man, the earth and everything in it should be blessed in reaction to man’s obedience to God.

Satan has laid claim to dominion of the earth on account of man’s disobedience. There are indications that God will, in reaction to man’s obedience, bless the earth:

“If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.” (Lev 26:3-4)

This may, in fact, be through the mechanism of the principles of curses or blessings coming from the earth in reaction to man’s actions. Indeed, many of the natural disasters we see and that the Bible indicates will increase in the end times will result from man’s increasing wickedness.

## **Promise of Dominion Restored**

The Bible describes the present state of the earth and all of creation:

“This entire planet eagerly waits for wicked, sinful, selfish humanity to be gloriously transformed back into perfect sons and daughters of God. For this entire creation was infected—not by its own choice, but by the choice of Adam—with the principle of the survival-of-the-fittest. It longs for the day when this destructive, selfish, fear-based, survival-of-the-fittest principle will be completely eradicated and all nature will be healed and restored into God's original ideal. We know that the entire creation has been agonizing as in the pains of childbirth, longing for delivery from Adam's fall, right up to the present time.” (Rom 8:19-22; The Remedy New Testament)

The earth and all of creation is waiting for the original dominion to be restored to the original managers operating along Godly principles. This will finally happen when God’s people escape the slavery of Satan and fully reflect God’s character – another topic.

# Eternal, Everlasting, Forever

Eternal, everlasting and forever are words of concern in relation to the character of God because they are commonly associated with never-ending punishment of the lost. This makes God to be very unjust – to punish forever the sins of a few decades of life – and discredits His character in many minds.

**Traditional Legal Model** – the lost are punished by God in a place of torment and that process is eternal, everlasting and goes on forever without end.

**Biblical Healing Model** – the “punishment,” in fact, lasts a relatively short time but the result - death (Rom 6:23) is eternal and is never reversed.

On the surface, there are verses that suggest the traditional understanding such as:

“And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matt 25:46)

How do we explain that verse in defense of God? First of all, we need to correctly understand the meaning of “punishment.” Please see the definition page for **punishment**. On this page, we will consider the meaning of the terms eternal, everlasting and forever as they come into the discussion of God’s treatment of the lost.

## Eternal Everlasting Effects

If a child is abusing an electronic device and you take it away and destroy it, are they experiencing eternal punishment? We could say “yes” if it is never replaced. However, the act of punishing lasts only a short time. So the act of punishing is brief but the results are long-term, even forever.

There are verses that speak of fire lasting forever such as:

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting** (G166) fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" (Matt 25:41)

However, there are also examples of everlasting fire that actually do go out:

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal** (G166) fire." (Jude 1:7)

Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning today. In fact, you can travel to the area of the south end of the Dead Sea and find their remains today. There are mounds of ash complete with sulfur balls where buildings once stood even arranged in streets. (See the evidence: <https://anchorstone.com/sodom-gomorrah/>) So, it is **the effect** of the fire, not the fire itself that is eternal. Note that "everlasting" and "eternal" in the two verses above are from the same original word.

"Who shall be punished with **everlasting** destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" (2 Thess 1:9)

If someone is punished by being destroyed, they are dead and gone; they are no longer experiencing the destruction once it has happened.

## Eternal Everlasting Who?

"**Eternal**" occurs only twice in the Old Testament. Here is one use:

"The **eternal** God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them*." (Deut 33:27)

In that case, considering that it is used in reference to God, it does mean unending.

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have **eternal** life?" (Matt 19:16)

Eternal life for the saved does not end as there will be no more death:

"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)

Notice the contrast within these two verses:

"That whosoever believeth in him should not **perish**, but have **eternal life**." (John 3:15)

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

The opposite of eternal life is eternal death or perishing. Those verses are contrasting two groups. Some get eternal life; some get a death that is everlasting. "Eternal" refers to the result rather than to an ongoing process. See the definition of **second death** in this glossary.

In the following verse, the action of judging does not go on forever, but the results do.

“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of **eternal** judgment.” (Heb 6:2)

## Everlasting can Signify Durability or Stability

The word "**everlasting**" is applied to things in some Bible passages that, in other passages, are clearly not "everlasting."

“The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of **the everlasting hills**: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.” (Gen 49:26)

“He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and **the everlasting mountains were scattered**, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways *are* everlasting.” (Hab 3:6)

The Bible states that the hills are not "everlasting:"

“For the mountains shall depart, and **the hills be removed**; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” (Isa 54:10)

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and **all the hills shall melt**.” (Amos 9:13)

Clearly the hills are not everlasting. This is just a Bible way of signifying durability or stability perhaps in contrast to things that are more transitory.

## Everlasting can Mean Continuous to a Point

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in **everlasting** chains under darkness unto the judgment (Jude 1:6)

The angels remain under those (figurative) chains continuously until the judgement. The expression “a chain of circumstances” is commonly used today.

“And the angels who rejected the truth about God chose to leave heaven and have become so settled into lies about God that no amount of truth and love can reach them; **their minds are bound in darkness**, and they are awaiting the final Day when the diagnosis of all will be revealed.” (Jude 6, The Remedy New Testament)

Because they are “settled into lies” (their minds are made up) there is no change in their thinking. Their state is continuous and unchanging or “everlasting.”

## A Long Time can Seem like Forever

When Jonah described his experience in the belly of whale. he said:

“I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me *for ever*; yet has Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.” (Jonah 2:6)

How could Jonah be in that condition “for ever” and tell the truth when he said, “Yet Thou hast brought me up”? For that matter, how could he have ever recorded his experience? In that case, “for ever” means as long as Jonah was inside the fish, which was three days and three nights. That might well have seemed like forever to Jonah. We use that term in the same way today as in “I had to wait in line forever.”

## A Challenge re Forever and Ever

Here is an example of the belief that forever and ever must mean without end:

“The phrase “forever and ever” occurs 20 times in the New Testament. In each verse, it speaks of something that will never end. But, annihilationists deny that people will suffer forever and ever in the Final Judgment, so in three important verses, they interpret them to mean that the continued suffering *will* end or will never occur (Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10.”  
(<https://carm.org/annihilationism/word-study-on-forever-and-ever-as-it-occurs-in-the-new-testament/>)

Here is one typical use in their list:

“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Phil 4:20)

That verse is speaking about God to Whom “forever and ever” certainly does apply. Then, here are the three verses they focus on:

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up **for ever and ever**: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” (Rev 14:11)

“And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up **for ever and ever**.” (Rev 19:3)

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night **for ever and ever.**” (Rev 20:10)

Note that the subject of those verses is not God.

## The Meaning in the Original Languages

Jeff Benner, a teacher of Ancient Hebrew, says this of the word “olam” often translated ever and everlasting:

“The Hebrew word *olam* literally means ‘beyond the horizon.’ When looking off in the far distance it is difficult to make out any details and what is beyond that horizon cannot be seen. This concept is the *olam*. The word *olam* is also used for time for the distant past or the distant future as a time that is difficult to know or perceive. This word is frequently translated as ‘eternity’ meaning a continual span of time that never ends. In the Hebrew mind it is simply what is at or beyond the horizon, a very distant time. A common phrase in the Hebrew is ‘*l'olam va'ed*’ and is usually translated as ‘forever and ever,’ but in the Hebrew it means ‘to the distant horizon and again’ meaning ‘a very distant time and even further.’” (Jeff Benner – <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/definition/eternity.htm>)

So, it can simply mean beyond what we can see or perceive. Here is the definition for the Greek original word:

165 αἰών *aion ahee-ohn'*

from the same as **104**; n m;

AV-ever 71, world 38, never + **3364** + **1519** + **3588** 6, evermore 4, age 2, eternal 2, misc 5; 128

1) for ever, an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity

2) the worlds, universe

3) period of time, age

Note that one definition is just an undefined “period of time.”

## Forever and the Devil

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

Will the devil be in a fire that never ends? Scripture indicates otherwise:



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

“And ye shall tread down the wicked; for **they shall be ashes** under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 4:3)

## Eternal, Everlasting, Forever – the Effects of Believing

The two main contexts in which these words are used are:

- Punishment lasting forever
- God and eternal life lasting forever

What is the effect on people who believe that punishment is from God and lasts forever? With that belief, wouldn't it be hard to love God? That is way beyond “you reap what you sow.”

On the other hand, what is the effect on people who believe and really appreciate that life in heaven will go on forever with a God of love? Wouldn't it fill them with wonder at such an amazing concept and inspire them to not miss heaven?

Most importantly, what is the effect of correctly understanding eternal, everlasting and forever on our understanding of the character of God?

# Fear

**Fear:** the definition has two major meanings within the Biblical context. Both gospel models share the meaning of to be in awe of or have reverence for God. The difference in understanding of the other major meaning – to be afraid – is given below:

**Traditional Legal Model** – If you sin, you are in danger of God’s judgment, condemnation and, ultimately, His punishment if that sin is not paid for. You had better be afraid and that fear is, in fact, a motivator for repentance.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Sin always has negative consequences (Rom 6:23, James 1:15) from which God is always trying to protect us. Even the sinner need not be afraid of God but, rather, needs to fear the sin. Sin is sin because of the hurt it can cause to the sinner not because God arbitrarily decided that certain actions should be classed as sinful.

This glossary introduces a third fear definition which could fit within either model.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Fear (noun)

1. a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined; the feeling or condition of being afraid.
4. reverential awe, especially toward God: the fear of God.

### Fear (verb, used with object)

7. to regard with fear; be afraid of.
  8. to have reverential awe of.
- (www.dictionary.com, accessed Feb.19, 2019)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### Fear (noun)

1. A painful emotion or passion excited by an expectation of evil, or the apprehension of impending danger. ...
6. In scripture, *fear* is used to express a filial or a slavish passion. In good men, the *fear* of God is a holy awe or reverence of God and his laws, which springs from a just view and real love of the divine character, leading the subjects of it to hate and shun every thing that can offend such a holy being, and inclining them to aim at perfect obedience. This is filial *fear*  
I will put my *fear* in their hearts. Jeremiah 32:39.  
Slavish *fear* is the effect or consequence of guilt; it is the painful apprehension of merited punishment. Romans 8:15.

**Fear (verb)**

1. To feel a painful apprehension of some impending evil; to be afraid of; to consider or expect with emotions of alarm or solicitude.
2. To reverence; to have a reverential awe; to venerate.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/fear>, accessed Feb. 19, 2019)

## Fear Definition in Different Uses

To distinguish between different definitions of “fear,” here is a good verse to start with:

“And Moses said unto the people, **Fear not**: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.” (Exo 20:20)

A good verse because both its uses of “fear” are from the same basic word yet have different meanings. The first “fear” is the verb “yare” (Strong’s H3372), the second is “yirah” (Strong’s H3374) which is the noun form of “yare” yet they seem to have very different meanings.

1. God was saying to the people “**do not fear;**” do not be afraid of the physical manifestations happening in front of you which were so fearful the people thought they might die.
2. God was also saying “**do fear;**” that they should be in awe or respectful of Him as a means of restraint from sinning.

He can’t be saying through Moses “**do not fear and do fear**” unless the context indicates a different meaning. This points out that the meaning of uses of “fear” very much need to be determined from the context.

The word fear, as the Bible uses it, has at least two basic meanings. One is fear as it is most commonly understood today – to be afraid of; to be in expectation of possible harm or loss. The second is to reverence, hold in awe or admiration. This becomes obvious as more verses are looked at. I would like to suggest a third fear definition (which I will explain) of paying or giving attention to someone or something.



## Fear Definition One – to be afraid of

Fear does not come from God; He does not want us to be in fear. These verses support the “being afraid” definition of “fear” but show that that is not God’s purpose:

“For God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim 1:7)

The Spirit of God is in opposition to His children having bondage to fear:

“For ye have **not** received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” (Rom 8:15)

The more our love of God is perfected the less fear we will have:

“There is **no** fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18)

“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,” (Luke 1:74)

Most people would understand the verses above to mean that if we are obedient, we do not need to fear God because He has forgiven us our debt to Him. However, ...

## Even Sinners Need Not Be Afraid of God

Even the Webster’s definition above speaks of “merited punishment.” The misunderstanding is that God punishes sin directly and personally. This is understood to be what sinners deserve to receive from God because of His **justice** (which is also misunderstood). The view is that you should be afraid of God’s judgment, condemnation and, ultimately, His punishment if you sin.

However, a God of infinite love and Whose “mercy endureth for ever” (1 Chron 16:34 and 40 other occurrences) does not “punish” sin. He does not have to. The punishment comes from the sin and its consequences directly.

God endeavors to protect everyone from [Satan the destroyer](https://characterofgod.org/satan-the-destroyer/) (https://characterofgod.org/satan-the-destroyer/) but He does not impose His protection or even His presence where it is not desired and when people chose to go their sinful way He will leave them to the results of their choices – which the Bible defines as God’s **wrath**.

## Fear Definition Two – to hold in awe or reverence

While there are no reasons to be afraid of God there are plenty of reasons to fear Him as in being in awe of Him. Just last month (Feb. 2019) astronomers announced the discovery of 300,000 previously-unknown galaxies using a new radio telescope. The universe is so vast and He spoke (One voice; uni-verse) it all into existence.

“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.” (Deut 10:20)

“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” (Psalm 34:7)

“And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” (Jer 33:9)

“Fear and tremble” for goodness? Perhaps “tremble” is another word that we need to investigate.

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:” (Heb 12:28)

Notice how the verse in Hebrews links godly fear with reverence.

While His creative works are indeed awe-inspiring, there are other reasons to hold Him in great awe; reasons related to His character.

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” (Psa 130:4)

If you haven’t yet, check out the meaning of **forgiveness**. The Bible teaches that God always forgives every sin.

## **Fear Definition Three – to pay attention to**

There are uses in the Bible of “fear” with the sense of “to pay attention to.” Possibly the most significant one is in the description of the seven trumpets of Revelation. The use of fear in the context of this verse is very interesting:

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment is come and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev 14:7)

This use of “fear” could fit either of the first two meanings depending on a person’s perspective. During the events of the trumpets, most people will be greatly afraid of God as they see the destructive events associated with those trumpets and believe He is causing them. They will tend to run from God as they perceive Him to be acting in the role of destroyer.

However, others, knowing that God is not like that, will tend to be in awe of and have great reverence for God as they understand what is really happening and God's relation to the events.

But the verse does not clearly say to be in awe of God, nor does it clearly say to be afraid of Him. It simply uses the one term – “fear God” as though it could apply to either group and match either definition of the word. It is as though the verse is simply saying “pay attention to God; make up your mind about Him.” See an interesting discussion of this verse and its connection to the seven trumpets – [Seven Trumpets – destruction from God?](https://characterofgod.org/revelation-8-seven-trumpets/) (<https://characterofgod.org/revelation-8-seven-trumpets/>)

Other examples of fear definition three can be seen in verses that use “hear” and “fear” together.

## **Fear Definition – “fear” and “fear” are mutually exclusive**

“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” (Psa 34:4)

If God is delivering us from all our fears He can't, at the same time, be asking us to fear Him – unless the fear of Him is a totally different form of fear.

Peter wrote “fear God” (1 Pet 2:17). John was either speaking of a different understanding of fear or was contradicting Peter when he wrote:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18)

“Fear” in 1 Pet 2:17 is the verb “phobeo” (Strong's G5399), while in 1 John 4:18 it is “phobos” (Strong's 5401) the noun form of “phobeo.” So if we are to both fear and love God and there is no fear in love, then there must be two mutually-exclusive forms of fear.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim 1:7)

God does not want us to fear – be afraid of Him (or anything) – but wants us to fear – be in awe of Him and His goodness.

## **Fear Definition – a few more verses**

Here is a verse seeming to say that Jesus feared:

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared,” (Heb 5:7)

It does not make sense that this was the be-afraid-of type of fear. Jesus was not afraid of His Father. The one other translation of the original word used in that verse is as “godly fear.”

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.” (Job 1:9-10)

Fear, in that use, cannot mean to be afraid of. Job was not afraid of someone who was protecting and blessing him. Job obviously recognized that he had been blessed by God – “The Lord gave.” (Job 1:21)

#### **Fear is linked to wisdom:**

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.” (Pro 3:7)

#### **Fear of the right kind is good for your longevity:**

“The fear <noun, 3374, yirah> of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.” (Pro 19:23)

It is well-understood that fear will cause stress and stress tends to shorten life.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Eccl 12:13)

**"Fear" and "fear not" are 2 of the most common commands in the Bible. It has been said that the Bible says "fear not" or equivalent 365 times - once for every day of the year.**

## **Fear Definition Summary**

Even the church has encouraged the understanding that people need to be afraid of God (it has been a good means of control). However, God uses only love to induce us to love and obey Him. God calls us to give heed to Him and to obey Him so that it may be well with us (Deut 5:29). That is the only “fear” He wants us to experience.

# Fire

The Biblical meaning of fire is very misunderstood. “Fire” is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. Here, we are most concerned about those that might impact our understanding of the character of God. The main distinction to be made is whether or not God uses fire to harm, kill or torture people.

## Traditional Legal Model

There are cases of literal fire coming directly from God at times for punishment of sin. With the non-Biblical tradition of immortality of the soul included, fire is also used to cause the lost to suffer intense pain forever.

## Biblical Healing Model

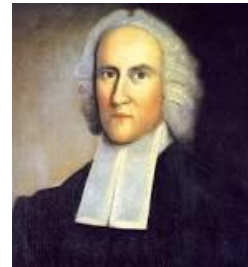
There are times when fire looks like punishment from God when it is just a reference to His presence. In other cases, God is not the source of the fire but it has been wrongly ascribed to Him.

## Wrong Understandings of the Fire of God

Most people either believe in or are aware of the common Christian concept of **hell**. It might be helpful to see a little of the process of how the current understanding developed.

### The First Great Awakening

**In the 1730s and 1740s** there was a Protestant religious revival (called The First Great Awakening) that swept Europe and British America. One preacher who made a big impact was **Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758). He famously preached a sermon on July 8, 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut titled: “**Sinners in the Hands of an Angry**



**God.”** The sermon was typical of many in that period with a strong emphasis on fire and brimstone meant to move people to repent of their sins to avoid the horrors of what was understood to be eternal damnation. And Edwards did all he could to make people want to avoid it. Here is a sample of his sermon:



"The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the **fire**, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like **fire**; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the **fire**; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours."



The motivation was obviously fear - look out for that vengeful God. But how does that correspond with:

"We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) ?

It obviously conflicts with the character of God. We can't just throw out verses that don't support our theological understanding; we need to resolve them.

Fortunately, **the first Great Awakening** was followed by **the Second Great Awakening** which began about 1790 and extended well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In that movement, there was considerable emphasis on understanding the true character of God. That message is currently being **revived**. (<https://characterofgod.org/history-character-god/>)

This study will consider the Biblical meaning of fire in the various ways it is used.

## Biblical Meaning of Fire – the Results

There are verses that speak of fire lasting forever such as:

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

However, there are Biblical examples of everlasting fire that actually goes out:

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, **suffering the vengeance of eternal fire**." (Jude 1:7)

Note that "everlasting" and "eternal" in the two verses above are from the same original word. Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning today. In fact, you can travel to the area of the south end of the Dead Sea and find their remains today. There are mounds of ash complete with sulfur balls where buildings once stood even arranged in streets as seen on this site:

<https://anchorstone.com/>.

So, it can be the effects of the fire not the fire itself that is eternal. See the definition for **eternal/everlasting/forever**.

## Biblical Meaning of Fire - Cleansing

Fire is often spoken of in the Bible as a cleansing agent to remove impurities.

"And I will bring the third part through **the fire**, and will **refine them** as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." (Zech 13:9)

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Pet 1:7)

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like **a refiner's fire**, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall **purify the sons of Levi**, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness." (Mal 3:2-3)

## Coals of Fire

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt **heap coals of fire on his head**. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom 12:20-21)

Here is the definition for the word translated as "heap:"

**4987 σωρεύω soreuo sore-yoo'-o**

from another form of **4673**; v

AV-heap 1, lade 1; 2

- 1) to heap together, to heap up
- 2) to overwhelm one with a heap of anything
- 3) metaph. to load one with **the consciousness of many sins**

See how the word for "heap" is used in this verse:

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women **laden (G4987) with sins**, led away with divers lusts," (2 Tim 3:6)

Here is a note for the meaning of the word "coals" from the On-Line Bible:

"The Arabians call things that cause very acute mental pain 'burning coals of the heart' and 'fire of the liver.'"

The connection of coals of fire to the conscience is explored more in my booklet [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

## Biblical Meaning of Fire - Theophany

Definition: "a manifestation or appearance of God or a god to a person." (dictionary.com)

"And **the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire** out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, **the bush burned with fire**, and the bush was not consumed." (Exo 3:2)

"And **the LORD went before them** by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night **in a pillar of fire**, to give them light; to go by day and night:" (Exo 13:21)

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and **with fire**:" (Matt 3:11)

## Biblical Uses of Fire - Miscellaneous Symbolic

Many verses speak in various ways of symbolic fire and its effects:

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke 12:49)

Jesus was not talking about lighting destructive fires. The meaning here is similar to the meaning for a "**sword**" that divides but not in a literal sense as in:

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt 10:34)

Fire and the sword are both likened to the word of God:

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" (Eph 6:17)

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer 23:29)

Fire can be used of **strong feelings** as in:

"And they said one to another, Did not **our heart burn within us**, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32)

Fire, as it can rapidly spread, is used symbolically in this way:

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And **the tongue is a fire**, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." (James 3:5-6)



Fire is also used in the sense of **to demonstrate or reveal** something:

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because **it shall be revealed by fire**; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by **fire**." (1 Cor 3:11-15)

## Fire from Within

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

This is referring to the end of Satan and is examined in more detail in my booklet [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

## Our God is a Consuming Fire

"For our God *is* a consuming fire." (Heb 12:29)

Does He go around like a pyromaniac burning things up?

OR

Do the wicked burn in His presence?

OR

Does the effect of seeing Him as He is cause people either:

- to rejoice - "this is our God" (Isa 25:9)
- or
- to (in the most extreme cases) be consumed with guilt and shame as they compare self with Him?

## The Lake of Fire

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: **which is** the second death." (Rev 21:8)

**After** all the wicked have died of their unhealed condition, a literal, cleansing fire melts the elements with fervent heat:



"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10)

Notice, that verse says nothing of fire burning people alive. Please see my booklet [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire) (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>) for what is really happening in that situation. It shows an interesting relationship between the Hebrew words for man and for fire.

## Who Shall Dwell in Everlasting Burnings?

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. **Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?** who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that **walketh righteously**, and **speaketh uprightly**; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;" (Isa 33:14-15)

"LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that **walketh uprightly**, and **worketh righteousness**, and speaketh the truth in his heart." (Psa 15:1-2)

The verses above show that the everlasting fire is actually the presence of God. Satan himself, before he left heaven, dwelt in that fire:

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; **thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.** Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, **from the midst of the stones of fire.**" (Eze 28:14-16)

Satan has twisted word meanings so that people now fear the fire of God when in the presence of the (symbolic) fire of God is exactly where we want to be:

"And I saw as it were **a sea of glass mingled with fire:** and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." (Rev 15:2)

We are also designed for love. Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Caroline Leaf has said: "we are wired for love," even that we are "designed to be **consumed** by love." An interesting use of the word consumed by Dr. Leaf. More people die from lack of love than any other disease.

# Forgiveness

**Traditional Legal Model** – Any sin incurs a debt and an entry in the record books of heaven for which justice demands a payment or penalty. The penalty and record of the sin can be erased or forgiven only by the payment of blood – the death of either the offender or a substitute. God grants forgiveness on the basis of the payment by the death of His Son if and when the sinner requests it. Forgiveness is conditional and mostly a bookkeeping or legal matter.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Sin damages relationships, always hurts the sinner in some way and usually hurts others as well. Any “penalties” are simply natural consequences resulting from the sin. Sinners can be described as sin-sick and in need of healing. God always forgives every sin; He does not hold our sins against us. What is needed on the part of the sinner is a realization of that freely-offered forgiveness and acceptance of it. Forgiveness is relational and (this is important to understand) a two-part transaction.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### **Forgiveness** (noun)

1. the act of forgiving or the state of being forgiven

### **Forgive verb** (used with object)

1. to grant pardon for or remission of (an offense, debt, etc.); absolve.
  2. to give up all claim on account of; remit (a debt, obligation, etc.).
  3. to grant pardon to (a person).
  4. to cease to feel resentment against: to forgive one’s enemies.
  5. to cancel an indebtedness or liability of: to forgive the interest owed on a loan.
- ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Jun. 10, 2019)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### **Forgiveness** (noun)

1. The act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. The *forgiveness* of enemies is a christian duty.

### **Forgive** (verb)

2. To pardon; to remit, as an offense or debt; to overlook an offense, and treat the offender as not guilty. The original and proper phrase is to *forgive* the offense, to send it away, to reject it, that is, not to impute it, [put it to] the offender.
- (<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Forgiveness>, accessed Jun. 10, 2019)

## Questions about Forgiveness

It helps our understanding to address the following questions:

1. Does forgiveness remove the legal debt incurred by individual acts of sin?
2. Does forgiveness remove the record of sins on one's account?
3. Does forgiveness remove a negative attitude toward us from God?
4. Does forgiveness mean that God forgets the sinful act happened?
5. Does forgiveness remove the guilt and shame we feel for having sinned?
6. Does forgiveness restore us to an attitude of trust in God?

Let's briefly look at each.

### 1. Does Forgiveness Remove the Legal Debt Incurred by Individual Acts of Sin?

No, because there is no legal debt. The understanding that forgiveness cancels a legal debt comes from a misunderstanding of how God's law functions and is at the root of the problem in much of the misunderstanding of God's character and His plan to save us. See the **glossary definition of law** for a correct understanding of how God's law functions. Closely connected to that is a correct understanding of the meaning of **God's justice**.

2.

### 3. Does Forgiveness Remove the Record of Sins in One's Account?

No, because there is no record for the purpose of settling accounts. While the all-knowing God does not forget anything in terms of not being able to recall events, He does not remember our sins with an attitude of "you'll pay for that." Read how [love thinketh no evil](https://characterofgod.org/thinketh-no-evil/) (https://characterofgod.org/thinketh-no-evil/) (keeps no record of wrongs).

### 3. Does Forgiveness Remove a Negative Attitude Toward us from God?

No, because our loving God never has negative feelings for us even when we sin. His relationship to us is much more that of a loving parent. The idea that the justice of an offended God must be satisfied comes from a misunderstanding of the meaning of God's justice. This is well-explained by [this illustration](https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/) (https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/)

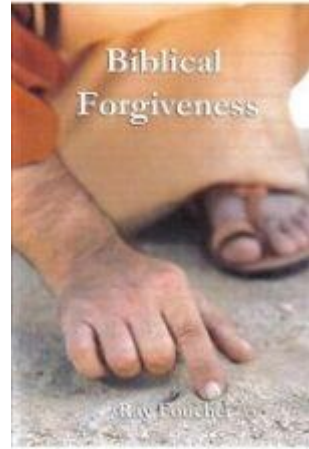
### 4. Does Forgiveness Mean that God Forgets the Sinful Act Happened?

No, the omniscient God never forgets anything. See a discussion of [forgetting and remembering wrongs](https://characterofgod.org/thinketh-no-evil/) (https://characterofgod.org/thinketh-no-evil/). The fact that sin happened, all of the resulting negative effects and that it was cured by the self-sacrificing remedy God provided will be insurance that it will not occur again. (Nahum 1:9)



### Forgiveness is a Two-part Process

Before looking at the last two questions, let's remind ourselves that the forgiving process has two parts – it is both given (by the forgiver) and received (by the forgivee). When you think about it and your own experiences with forgiving and being forgiven, this is logical. My booklet [Biblical Forgiveness: Are There Two Types?](https://www.characterofgod.org/resources/#biblical-forgiveness) (<https://www.characterofgod.org/resources/#biblical-forgiveness>) explains this in detail.



#### 5. Does Forgiveness Remove the Guilt and Shame We Feel for Having Sinned?

Yes, it should and that is part of the healing process that is so important in the **Biblical Healing Model of the Gospel**. Those feelings are only meant to send us to God who can heal us from the effects of sin. (Like physical pain moves us to seek a pain reliever.)

#### 6. Does Forgiveness Restore us to an Attitude of Trust in God?

Yes, it should as we realize that God's laws are design or natural laws rather than imposed or arbitrary laws and are meant only for our good and our protection.

While sin is commonly thought of an action that violates rules given by God, sin, at its core, is a lack of trust in God which stems from not correctly understanding His character. More about this in the glossary's **definition of sin**.

## Myths about Forgiveness

[The Seven Myths of Forgiveness](https://comeandreason.com/index.php/en/media-center/column1/healing-the-mind-seminar/6-forgiveness-common-myths) (<https://comeandreason.com/index.php/en/media-center/column1/healing-the-mind-seminar/6-forgiveness-common-myths>) are well described by [Dr. Timothy Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>). These are important to understand in connection with forgiveness. The seven myths are that forgiveness:

- means restored trust
- comes only after the offender says they are sorry
- equals salvation
- means what they did was okay
- leads to greater vulnerability
- means forgetting
- means the offender gets away with it

Forgiveness is not granted on condition of repentance - it is always available. However, it is received on condition of repentance - on an acceptance that God is ever-merciful and freely grants forgiveness.

## Summary

The ever-merciful God always freely grants unconditional forgiveness; it is only up to us to accept it. Unfortunately, the enemy has introduced a legal mindset that requires a penalty for every sin. God's laws are there to protect and when we break those laws God's effort is to heal the damage done.

# Forsake

**Forsake definition according to two models of the gospel.** We are looking mainly at what it means for God to forsake a person or group. Does He do it and, if so, how? And, if not, what is the meaning of the word “forsake”?

**Traditional Legal Model:** Especially in reaction to people turning from or disobeying him, God will forsake them in return.

**Biblical Healing Model:** While God will honor our choices to turn from Him; even to follow other gods, He will never forsake us as in abandoning us.

## Dictionary.com

**Forsake** verb (used with object)  
to quit or leave **entirely**; abandon; desert

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

In scripture, God forsakes his people, when he withdraws his aid, or the light of his countenance.

Notice the dictionary.com definition includes “entirely” which would suggest finality; no return to the relationship. Webster’s definition indicates an active withdrawal on God’s part obviously in reaction to something man has done.

## I Will Not Forsake

There are a number of verses saying God will not forsake:

*“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**”* (Heb 13:5)

*“(For the LORD thy God *is* a merciful God;) **he will not forsake** thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.”* (Deut 4:31)

He will not forsake because He is a merciful God.

*“O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good; for **his mercy endureth for ever.**”* (1 Chron 16:34)

Since His mercy endures forever, the suggestion is that He can never forsake.

*Moses to Joshua:* "And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, **he will not fail thee, neither forsake** thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." (Deut 31:8)

## I Will Forsake

Then there are verses saying He will forsake:

"Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake** them, and **I will hide my face from them**, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods." (Deut 31:17-18)

That is a very good example of the **S-W-A-T** formula:

"Then my **anger shall be kindled** against them in that day, and **I will forsake them**, and **I will hide my face from them**, and **they shall be devoured**, and **many evils and troubles shall befall them**; so that they will say in that day, Are not these **evils come upon us**, because **our God is not among us**? And **I will surely hide my face** in that day for **all the evils** which they shall have wrought, in that they are **turned unto other gods**." (Deut 31:17-18)

The S-W-A-T pattern is:

Because of man's **Sin**  
 God in "**Wrath**" or "**anger**"  
**Accommodates** the sinner's choices and  
**Trouble** comes (from a source other than God).

See a detailed explanation of this in relation to the **wrath of God**. God does not leave or forsake as we might understand it but He allows man to experience the results or fruits of his own choices.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal 6:7)

To interfere with the results of our actions would be to limit free will. After all, we do actions to get results. The SWAT formula is described more at: <https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/> with over 70 examples. Because "to leave" and "to forsake" are close in meaning that is helpful in this understanding.

This establishes that in those many examples He is not afflicting but, rather, He is simply honoring their free wills and allowing them to experience the consequences of their choices.

## God With Us on Different Levels:

It helps me to understand that God is with us or interacts with us on different levels or to different degrees:

### 1. Upholding/sustaining – upholding all things

“Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things** by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb 1:3)

He interacts with people on that level, essentially keeping us and even Satan alive, no matter how they regard Him.

### 2. Blessing – rain on just and unjust

“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt 5:45)

Just or unjust, He sends the rain, physical blessings on all.

### 3. Protection

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psa 91:1)

He assigns a guardian angel to every person but believers can ask and receive beyond the default level of protection.

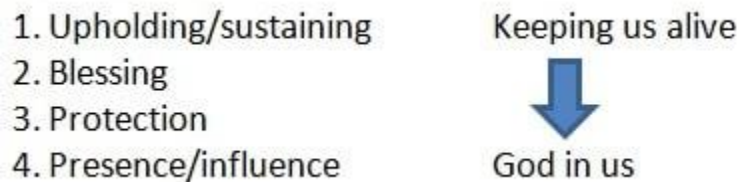
“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:” (Matt 7:7)

### 4. Presence/influence – indwelling by His Spirit

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” (Acts 5:32)

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:23)

The stages get more close and personal and progress from merely keeping us alive physically to having a close, directing influence spiritually:



Level 4 would be like:

“And **thine ears shall hear a word behind thee**, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Isa 30:21)

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and **he shall direct thy paths.**” (Pro 3:5-6)

Understanding the different levels might help but let's look at another verse:

“And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD *is* with you, while ye be with him; and **if** ye seek him, he will be found of you; but **if** ye forsake him, **he will forsake you.**” (2 Chron 15:2)

That makes it sound like God's decision to forsake or not is conditional or it may just reflect the understanding of the speaker. Ultimately, it is man's decisions that determine how close a relationship God will have with us.

## Partial Withdrawal (Partially Forsaking)

There are also cases where God does not fully forsake a person but honors their decisions in a particular area of their life giving the appearance of Him withdrawing.

Imagine that you have an adult child who has been diagnosed with a serious disease and you feel strongly and advise them to take a particular type of treatment. If they should be opposed to that and choose another treatment, because they are adults, you have to respect their freedom to choose. In a sense:

- you honor their decision and "withdraw" from them in that area
- you let them have their way
- you respect their freedom of choice

At the same time, in every other way, you maintain the parent to adult child relationship. Essentially, other than on that point, nothing changes, except for some disappointment on the part of the parent.

When God told Moses he was to lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses, at first, rejected God's plan that he should speak for God and [God accommodated Moses' reluctance](https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) (<https://characterofgod.org/amos-turns-god/>), eventually appointing Aaron to a supporting role.

"And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." (Exo 4:16)






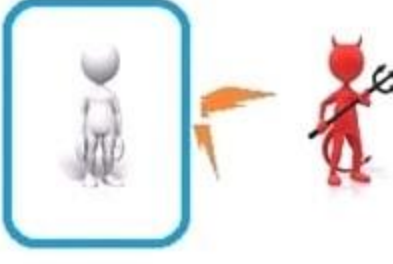
See [more examples](https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) of Divine accommodation. (<https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/>)

God did not forsake Moses when he refused God's assignment but God accommodated him resulting in another example of the SWAT pattern:

Moses' **sin of distrust** caused **the Lord's wrath** which was manifested in God "**accommodating**" Moses' request by instead appointing Aaron in Moses' place in that role and we know **the trouble (the golden calf incident etc)** that resulted from Aaron holding the position of authority that he did.

## Forsaking vs Not Protecting

This series of images illustrates how God "leaves" or "forsakes" but is always there to respond to our return to Him.

		
God's law is meant as a hedge of protection.	Wanting what is "out there" we sin, causing breaches in the hedge.	That gives Satan access to tempt and harass us
		
Some rebel, reject God's law and step outside of His protection.	Then they are entirely unshielded from Satan's attacks.	Turn to God in trust and He will restore the hedge of protection.

See a more-detailed [explanation](https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/) of this process (<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>).

An appropriate verse:

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." (Eccl 10:8)

That includes a hedge of protection.

Has God removed His protection in such a case? No, He has merely allowed a free-will choice to step out of the hedge of protection.

The stories of [King Herod](https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) (<https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/>) and [Uzzah](https://characterofgod.org/breach-uzzah/) (<https://characterofgod.org/breach-uzzah/>) may be examples of that. The same action by God is indicated at the time of the flood:

"Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?" (Job 22:15-17)



## Word Meanings

It is important to consider different possible meanings of words. To forsake does not usually mean simply to physically turn and walk away.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and **will forsake me**, and break my covenant which I have made with them.” (Deut 31:16)

The word “forsake” is azab (H5800) the meanings of which include:

### Forsake H5800 אָזַב ‘azab *aw-zab*’

a primitive root; v;

AV-forsake 129, leave 72, leave off 4, faileth 2, fortify 2, help 2, committeth 1, destitute 1, refuseth 1, surely 1; 215

1) to leave, loose, forsake

1a) (Qal) to leave

**1a1) to depart from, leave behind, leave, let alone**

1a2) to leave, abandon, forsake, neglect, apostatise

**1a3) to let loose, set free, let go, free**

The word “forsake” in the original is in the Qal verb form so the definition should be one of the three given. God’s people were forsaking Him by going after other gods and by breaking His covenant. That fits the Strong’s definition “**1a1) to depart from, leave behind, leave, let alone.**” Then God’s reaction is given:

“Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and **I will forsake** them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us?” (Deut 31:17)

God’s reaction (His “forsaking”) was to **reluctantly** let them have their own way, according to another meaning of the original word: “**1a3) to let loose, set free, let go, free.**”

So while God will allow man to go his own way, He does not forsake as in entirely giving up on a person. His attitude is shown by these verses:

“And when he was come near, **he beheld the city, and wept over it**, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on

every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)

If His forsaking was definition the **1a1** option, it would be like “Forget it, I have had enough of you, I don’t care what happens to you.” So His “forsaking” must be as in definition **1a3**.

And we know that He did care:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!” (Matt 23:37)

“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” (Hosea 11:8)

“But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So **I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust:** *and* they walked in their own counsels.” (Psa 81:11-12)

“Gave them up unto” or let them have their own way.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*. Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is* among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.” (Jer 6:16-19)

## Principles

Let’s consider the question of whether God forsakes people or not from the perspective of principles.

**Principle: God is love** – therefore He cannot forsake us.

“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an **everlasting love:** therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jer 31:3)

**Principle: God honors free will** – therefore He cannot impose His will or presence upon us.

Putting those two principles together, we conclude that He can never forsake as in to leave entirely but He must (being consistent with His character of love) always allow complete freedom of choice.

“And he said, **I will hide my face** from them, **I will see** what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith.” (Deut 32:20)

“Hide my face” is a way of saying He will not interfere with free will. Yet, He has not entirely forsaken as many might suppose because He sees what is going on; He does care.

# Free Will

See entry for "[command](#)"

## Glory

**“Glory”** has two primary meanings. One is the physical aspect – brightness, beauty, shining etc and is common to both models. The other, more related to character and also common to both, has a different emphasis between models as described below.

**Traditional Legal Model** – the emphasis is often on God’s majesty, holiness, honor, fame and power. It could be thought of as “look at how great I am.”

**Biblical Healing Model** – God’s glory is mainly the attributes of His character that are more other-centered: His love, goodness, forgiveness, respect for the freedom of others; even His humbleness.

### From a Modern Dictionary

#### Glory (noun)

- very great praise, honor, or distinction bestowed by common consent; renown: to win glory on the field of battle.
- something that is a source of honor, fame, or admiration; a distinguished ornament or an object of pride:
- adoring praise or worshipful thanksgiving: Give glory to God.
- resplendent beauty or magnificence: the glory of autumn.

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/glory?s=t>)

### Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

#### Glo’ry, *noun*

1. Brightness; luster; splendor.

The moon, serene in *glory* mounts the sky.

For he received from God the Father honor and *glory* when there came such a voice to him from the excellent *glory* 2 Peter 1:17.

In this passage of Peter, the latter word *glory* refers to the visible splendor or bright cloud that overshadowed Christ at his transfiguration. The former word *glory* though the same in the original, is to be understood in a figurative sense.

5. Honor; praise; fame; renown; celebrity. The hero pants for *glory* in the field. It was the *glory* of Howard to relieve the wretched.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/glory>)

The modern dictionary cited here puts less emphasis on the visible than the Webster's 1828 dictionary.

## Wikipedia

**Glory** (from the Latin gloria, "fame, renown") is used to describe the manifestation of God's presence as perceived by humans according to the Abrahamic religions."  
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glory\\_\(religion\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glory_(religion)))

## God Defines His Glory

Here is perhaps the best definition of glory, coming from God Himself. Moses, a friend of God (Exo 33:11) asked to see God's glory:

"And he said, I beseech thee, **shew me thy glory.**" (Exo 33:18)

In response to Moses' request, God said:

"And he said, I will make all **my goodness** pass before thee, and I will proclaim **the name** of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (Exo 33:19)

God's goodness would, of course, be the good aspects of His character (there are no bad ones). And He said He would proclaim His **name** which is commonly associated with character. From the verse above we could make this equivalence:

I will make all my goodness pass before thee	=	I will proclaim the name of the LORD
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The Septuagint uses "glory" for goodness in Exodus 33:19. That glory equates to goodness and character is confirmed by this verse:

"And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:" (Exo 33:22)

God said He would make His goodness pass by (Exo 33:19) and He said His glory would pass by (Exo 33:22). As God's goodness/glory passed by He said:

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,** and that will

by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*." (Exo 34:6-7)

Merciful, gracious etc are character traits. God's character includes that He is merciful, gracious etc. So we could say that (among other things) to be merciful (forgiving sins) is consistent with God's character. Indeed, the **definition for forgiveness** shows that He forgives all sins.

## Giving Glory to God

There are a number of verses that talk of giving glory to God or glorifying Him. Jesus healed ten lepers and sent them to show themselves to the priests.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke 17:15-18)

How did the leper give glory to God?

Does "give glory to Him" mean to give God some extra physical brilliance or does it mean to credit Him with and acknowledge goodness and mercy, His good character?

There is another way in which God's people can give Him glory:

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:20)

How can we glorify God in that way? Those who trust God and take His good health advice will experience better health thereby showing the goodness of God in providing that counsel, for example the list of clean and unclean foods in Leviticus 11.

## Some Bible Uses of Glory

"Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." (Psa 96:3)

What is the connection between the two parts of that verse?

The parallel structure indicates that to "declare His glory" is to make His deeds known. So part of His glory is deeds including how He treats people.

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Cor 4:3-4)

“The glorious gospel” is the wonderful good news of the salvation that God has provided through His Son.

“Who [His Son] being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb 1:3)

Here is the verse above from a paraphrased version:

“Jesus Christ is the radiant glory of God’s methods and principles lived out in human flesh. He is the exact manifestation of God’s character—the complete revelation of his being — sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he provided the Remedy necessary to heal mankind from the infection of sin and selfishness, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven,” (Heb 1:3, The Remedy New Testament)

The manifestation of God’s glory in Jesus’ life was not primarily outward:

“For he [“the arm of the LORD” = the Messiah] shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is no beauty* that we should desire him.” (Isa 53:2)

Form or comeliness refers to physical attributes. The Savior did not attract attention because of outward good looks but because of His inward beauty of character. That was also seen in His actions as He demonstrated such traits as grace and truth:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Rom 3:23)

Does “short of the glory” mean we not shining brightly enough? Or does that mean something else?

## Glory as Light

There are definitely verses that speak of glory as shining light:

“The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” (Isa 60:19)

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev 21:23)

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.” (Exo 34:29-30)

## When God Comes Near

As we become more aware of God’s presence and the glory of His character there is a reaction in man.

“Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for **my comeliness was turned in me into corruption**, and I retained no strength.” (Dan 10:8)

“**Comeliness**” is from the Hebrew word “howd” (Strong’s H1935)

AV-glory 9, honour 6, majesty 4, beauty 1, comeliness 1, glorious 1, goodly 1, honourable 1; 24

1) splendour, majesty, vigour

“**Corruption**” is from “mashchiyth” (H4889)

AV-destroy 4, corruption 2, destruction 2, set a trap 1, destroying 1, utterly 1; 11

1) ruin, destruction

Daniel realized his own glory was as nothing in comparison to God’s. Note that Daniel has no sins recorded against him.

The prophet Isaiah had a similar experience:

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with



twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, **Woe is me! for I am undone**; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isa 6:1-5)

Also, Gideon felt similarly from an appearance of "an angel of the LORD":

"And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, **Alas**, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." (Jud 6:22-23)

This is surprising:

"And when I (John) saw him [the Son of man in vision], **I fell at his feet as dead**. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:" (Rev 1:17)

Surprising because this is written by John the Revelator, the disciple whom Jesus loved, describing his reaction when seeing his friend Jesus. It shows, because of the vast difference between man's glory and God's glory, the great effect on man's senses.

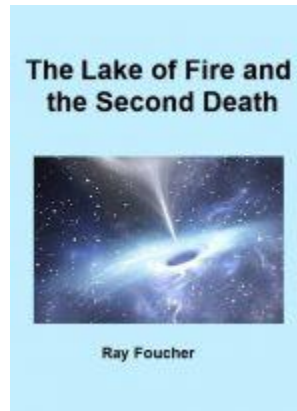
"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and **glory.**" (Mark 13:26)

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall **see him**, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall **wail because of him**. Even so, Amen." (Rev 1:7)

Why are they wailing? Is it because the lights are too bright or because they are afraid He is going to kill them? There is that but could it also be because they are conscience-stricken? What effect will an awareness of the glory of God have on sinners who have rejected God? It will be much worse than for the individuals mentioned above who had not rejected God. Even in them, there was an awareness of their character defects in comparison – Daniel's comeliness becoming corruption and Isaiah's awareness of his uncleanness.



An awareness of their sinfulness in the presence of total selflessness is what destroys the unrepentant in the “lake of fire” experience. This is described in my e-book [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)



# Gospel

What is the Gospel? The gospel needs to be correctly understood in spite of the almost universal confusion over it. This study looks for a definition consistent with the character of God.

**Traditional Legal Model:** The good news of the kingdom of God including that God would send His Son to pay the penalty for sin so that we could be forgiven.

**Biblical Healing Model:** The good news of a God of love Who is more concerned for our happiness than for His own; Who forgives all sins and acts always in love.

Those brief model descriptions don't seem that different, yet, when the various terms included in this glossary are understood according to their true meaning, the contrast is apparent. Then the true good news is seen to be much better than the usual understanding.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, **having the everlasting gospel to preach** unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," (Rev 14:6)

The word "gospel" (Greek "euaggelion") means good news. Originally it referred to the good news that the Messiah had come and the message He proclaimed. Later, it was applied to the narrative of the life of Christ and, finally, to the written "gospels" of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

## What is the Gospel? - My Attempt at Defining:

"The gospel is especially good news in light of the bad news that we are spiritually sick and, apart from God, in a hopeless state. The gospel gives the solution by revealing the character of a God of love who does not condemn us and is doing all He can to save us. He proposes to heal our terminal condition through the life and example of His Son motivating us to trust Him to change us with our cooperation into His likeness.

If the gospel is "the everlasting gospel" it must have always existed or at least as long as there was a problem the gospel was designed to fix; that problem being sin. Let's look at the gospel from different points in salvation history.

## The Gospel in Eden

After Adam and Eve sinned and the future looked like there would be only bad news, the good news came in the form of a promise:

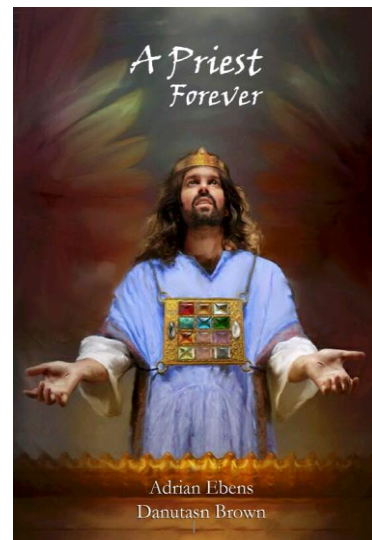
"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen 3:15)

Think of the bad news as that mankind has just come down with a terrible disease - an alienation from God caused by taking poison from the enemy - His lies about the character of God resulting in distrust of their Creator. The good news then is that God will put an enmity or distrust of Satan and his lies back into man thus initiating the healing process.

## The Gospel from Moses

"For unto us was the gospel preached, **as well as unto them** [the Israelites]: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*." (Heb 4:2)

"The gospel is good news of forgiveness and grace freely available. It would not have been good news for Israel to have preached to them that forgiveness and grace would come 1500 years after they were dead, leaving them with no ability to overcome sin in this life. This would have been merely the promise of the gospel and not the gospel itself. Such preaching would have only been words of mockery to Israel, condemning them to death without any hope of tasting in their lives the grace of Christ. **We repeat the point that shadows only exist because the reality existed before them.**" (Adrian Ebens, A Priest Forever)



That verse in Hebrews and the statement above point to the presence of the gospel in the time of Israel; it was there and functioning. For the good news to be good news it must offer benefit those who hear it.

## Isaiah the Gospel Prophet

Isaiah, who is often referred to as the gospel prophet, wrote of the coming of the Messiah and His message of good news:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach **good tidings** unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*; To

proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;" (Isa 61:1-2)

Jesus quoted those verses except He left out the "**vengeance**" (<https://characterofgod.org/vengeance-definition/>) part because, by His time, there was great (and popular) misunderstanding of the role of the Messiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach **the gospel** to the poor; he hath sent me to **heal** the brokenhearted, to preach **deliverance** to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

The next thing He said was:

"... This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21)

By saying that He was announcing His ministry to them and pointing to the work He would do which was very much good news to the poor, the brokenhearted etc. It was not good news in the understanding of those (especially the leaders in Israel) who were more concerned about their own position and power.

## The Gospel in Romans

The gospel is presented by Paul in Romans but without the account of Christ's life.

"For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Rom 1:16-17)

"The gospel of Christ" is the power of God unto salvation" or the power to save. To save from what? It must be to save (related to the word "salve") or heal from our condition in which we are separated from God. God will not save anyone who does not want to be saved, to have their relationship with Him restored. The power of God that saves is the good news of Who He is and what He is like.

## The Gospel in Revelation (now and future)

The book of Revelation connects the gospel to judgment in the time of the end:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, **having the everlasting gospel to preach** unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, **Fear God, and give glory to him; for the**

hour of his judgment is come: and **worship him** that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Rev 14:7)

Those preaching the gospel say:

- "fear God"
- "give glory to him"
- "worship him that made ..." (the Creator)

They do it because "the hour of his judgment is come."

It is not commonly understood that judgment is primarily about God being judged:

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome **when thou art judged.**" (Rom 3:4)

Each person, in a sense, judges God and His principles. Those who reject the gospel judge God to be untrustworthy, effectively judging themselves so that they will not be healed. Notice how the gospel is equated with the word:

"For unto us was the **gospel** preached, as well as unto them: but the **word** preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*." (Heb 4:2) (see also Acts 8:25 and Eph 1:13)

Rejecting the word (the gospel) prevents it from healing them and they thus also reject eternal life:

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that **the word of God** should first have been spoken to you: but seeing **ye put it from you**, and **judge yourselves** unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46)

For **G**od so  
**L**oved the world, that he gave his only begotten  
**S**on, that whosoever believeth in him should not  
**P**erish, but have  
**E**verlasting  
**L**ife." (John 3:16)

**What is the gospel?** It is the good news that God is good, He is on your side, He wants you to trust Him to heal you. If a person believes the lie that God is not good, thus rejecting the freely-offered healing they will not be healed. So believe the gospel, the good news about the character of God and allow Him to heal and save you.

# Guilt

- see entry for "[shame](#)"

# Hardened

**Traditional Legal Model** – To be hardened is understood to be an individual's action of resisting or refusing truth.

**Biblical Healing Model** – The meaning is the same but the word is included in the glossary to clearly distinguish who is responsible for the hardening.

## From a Modern Dictionary:

**Hardened** (adjective)

1. made or become hard or harder.
  2. pitiless; unfeeling.
  3. firmly established or unlikely to change; inveterate: a hardened criminal.
- ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Dec. 19, 2018)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Hardened** (*participle passive*)

Made hard, or more hard or compact; made unfeeling; made obstinate; confirmed in error or vice.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/hardened>, accessed Dec. 19, 2018)

Of course, in uses such as "he hardened his heart," hardened is a verb.

## Usage of Hardened

The word is used in 33 verses with 20 of those also using the word "heart."

Six of the remaining verses associated hardening with the neck rather than the heart. This verse shows the closeness of meaning:

"And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel." (2 Chron 36:13)

The original word translated as "stiffened" in the verse above is most often translated as "harden." A hard or stiff neck is one that will not turn easily which could be understood as

equivalent to a heart that will not repent. In that verse, King Nebuchadnezzar hardened his own heart.

## The Heart of Pharaoh was Hardened

The real issue with this word is that, in many cases, it is said that “The Lord hardened his heart” in reference to Pharaoh of Egypt. Even before Moses left Midian for Egypt the Lord said to him:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.” (Exo 4:21)

There are actually 10 verses saying that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart: Exo 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1, 20, 27, 11:10, 14:4, 8, 17.

But there are also 10 verses saying that Pharaoh’s (or the Egyptian’s) heart was hardened or he hardened his own heart: Exo 7:13, 14, 22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:7, 34, 35, 13:15 (Note that Exo 7:13 has the same original wording as Exo 7:22 and should be translated the same.)

That makes it a tie. So who actually hardened Pharaoh’s heart? Was it God in some cases and Pharaoh in others? There are a number of factors to consider.

Most importantly, God hardening anyone’s heart would be contrary to His desire that all men might be saved.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:4)

That He should harden anyone’s heart to keep them from repenting makes no sense at all. Consider:

“The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet 3:9)

Another factor to recognize is the attitude of Pharaoh:

“And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” (Exo 5:2)

It was Pharaoh who refused to humble himself, as God Himself said:



“And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.” (Exo 10:3)

Pharaoh refused; it was an act of his own will. Perhaps it was his pride being the mighty, exalted Pharaoh that kept him from turning to God; it certainly was not God Himself.

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” (Psa 10:4)

Also, it is important to recognize the Biblical principle that, in scripture, [God is often said to do that which He allows](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/) (https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/). There are [many examples](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/) (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/) apart from the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.

Even the heathen recognized that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. This was the advice given to the Philistines by their priests and diviners (1 Sam 6:2):

“Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?” (1 Sam 6:6)

## The Choice is Up to Us

Another way to look at it is that God did harden Pharaoh’s heart but only indirectly. God was urging Pharaoh to change his mind and let Israel go. The desired effect was that Pharaoh’s heart would be softened. God was working on his heart; the critical factor was how Pharaoh would react to that.

One cause can have opposite effects depending on the nature of what or the reaction of who it is acting on. That is the basis of this famous quote:

“The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins” – Spurgeon

God leaves it up to each one to respond or not. Likewise, the Bible essentially leaves it up to the reader to decide how he sees God as acting based on their evaluation of Him. God does not interfere with free will. He asks us to choose:

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Josh 24:15)

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21)

God does not force the will, which is what He would be doing if He did directly harden the heart.

To help make the right choice in your opinion of how God acted in the situation under consideration, it is helpful to know the factors that cause hearts to be hardened or softened. See [How Hearts are Hardened](https://characterofgod.org/hearts-hardened/) (https://characterofgod.org/hearts-hardened/)

# Hell

Hell, as described in the Bible, is a place only for people worse than myself, right? Or is it a place at all? We should know what the Bible says about hell. This is critical in relation to the character of God because the common concept of hell is a place where God sends people He doesn't like or who have not met some standard of His. And that could make Him kind of scary and, frankly, not very lovable.

**Traditional Legal Model** - a literal place where God sends the unsaved to be punished by fire for (in most beliefs) eternity.

**Biblical Healing Model** - the place (the grave) of the dead - both saved and unsaved - where they await, without consciousness, the resurrection.

## Modern Definition

**Hell** (noun)

"The place or state of punishment of the wicked after death; the abode of evil and condemned spirits; Gehenna or Tartarus." (<https://www.dictionary.com/>)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Hell** (noun)

The place or state of punishment for the wicked after death. Matthew 10:28. Luke 12:5. (<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/hell>)

The common understanding of hell has been around for a long time thus there is no real difference between 1828 and now. Here is one passage that could contribute to that sort of thinking:

"The same shall drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and **he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone** in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up **for ever and ever**: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Rev 14:10-11)

That passage has "**fire and brimstone**," "**for ever and ever**," "**torment**" and "**the wrath of God**." While most people would readily associate that with hell, to correctly understand hell in the Bible, we need to look at how the Bible itself uses those key words. The popular understanding of "hell" is connected to the wrong definitions of those and other terms.



Here we will focus on the meaning of "hell" as the Bible itself uses it after a brief look at the other terms. You may see detailed definitions for "**fire**," "**torment**," God's "**wrath**" and "**forever**" in this glossary.

## Hell - Everlasting, Eternal and Forever and Ever?

The meaning of **eternal and similar terms** depends on the context of the use of the word. When used in reference to God it can literally mean without end because He is eternal. Applied to others, it can mean a limited time. An example:

"And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him **for ever**." (Exo 21:5-6)

In this case, the slave is opting to stay with his master and serve him for as long as he lives and it is termed "forever." Another example:

"But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide **for ever**." (1 Sam 1:22)

Of course, Hannah's son Samuel only lived there for a limited period of time.

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire**." (Jude 1:7)

The fire is described as "eternal" yet it has been out for many centuries. You can see those cities today - just piles of ash and not even a wisp of smoke. It is only **the effects** of the fire that are eternal.

In the Bible, "forever" and "eternal" do not always mean never-ending. Those terms can also mean that the consequences of an action/event last through eternity. They will never be reversed. A good example:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be **tormented day and night for ever and ever.**" (Rev 20:10)

Is the devil to be tormented forever? No, in fact the Bible gives details of his end:

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

Compare to this use:

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for **ever** and **ever**. Amen." (1 Pet 4:11)

Is God to be praised for ever? Yes

## Unquenchable Hell Fire?

"And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10 **It shall not be quenched** night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up **for ever**: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it **for ever and ever.**" (Isa 34:9-10)

There have been fires that man could not quench such as the fires at the twin towers in New York City on 9/11. However, once the fuel is used up, a fire always goes out.

## Hell and God's Wrath

This verse suggests there is a difference between the wrath of man and that of God:

"For the **wrath of man** worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)

God's **wrath** is to allow the consequences of man's free-will choices to occur without interference from Him.

## The Torment of Hell

The torment that the lost will suffer in the lake-of-fire experience will be primarily emotional rather than physical. That is well described in the booklet [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

## Hell Correctly Understood

In light of those understandings, here is Revelation 14:10-11 again with some words crossed out and words added in bold print which more accurately state the meaning of the terms substituted:

"The same shall  
**experience final separation from God** ~~drink of the wine of the wrath of God~~, which is  
**going to be total** (undiluted) ~~poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;~~  
 and he shall be **mentally afflicted** ~~tormented~~  
 with **the awareness of God's love and his rejection of it** ~~fire and brimstone~~  
 in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:  
 And the **remembrance of their affliction** ~~smoke of their torment~~  
**Is before God** ~~ascendeth up~~ for ever and ever: (He will never forget them)  
 and **that process will be continual for those** ~~they have no rest day nor night,~~  
 who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."  
 (Revelation 14:10- 11, clarified)

Does that give a different picture of the experience normally thought of as hell?

## What About Satan?

"Yet thou [Satan] shalt be brought down to **hell**, to the sides of the pit." (Isa 14:15)

Is Satan going to burn in or at least be confined to hell?

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

Satan will not be in charge of hell; in fact He will be destroyed by mental anguish and guilt coming from within himself as a result of his choices and his resistance of God's love.

The same shall happen to the lost:

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be **stubble**: and the day that cometh shall burn them **up**, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Mal 4:1)

This and other scriptures were written to show the completeness of the destruction. They are not to be taken literally.

## Sheol, Hades = the Grave

### Sheol

The Hebrew word "sheol" is translated as "hell" 31 times and means "the grave" as it was translated in many other verses such as:

"And all his [Jacob] sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the **grave** unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." (Gen 37:35)

Of course, Jacob did die and go into the grave but he did not go to a place of punishment.

"What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the **grave**? Selah." (Psa 89:48)

Implied is that no man (saved or lost) can be delivered from the grave.

### Hades

The Greek word "hades" is also translated as "hell" as in:

"And death and **hell** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev 20:14)

Most versions of the Bible just use the word "hades" in that verse rather than "hell." Other uses of "hades" can be understood as meaning the grave and the KJV does translate it that way:

"O death, where *is* thy sting? O **grave**, where *is* thy victory?" (1 Cor 15:55)

## Destroyed in Hell

Here is a verse that might induce fear of God into people:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt 10:28)

But we need to have a correct understanding of the use of the word "him" in that verse. See a detailed explanation of [Matthew 10:28](https://characterofgod.org/matthew-10-28/). (<https://characterofgod.org/matthew-10-28/>)

The word translated as "hell" in that verse is from the Greek "Gehenna" which was originally the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem which was basically the city dump with a fire continually burning to consume the waste. It is used in a figurative sense in scripture to refer to final destruction.

## Hell and Justice

Is burning people in hell forever an appropriate form of **justice**? What crime would justify society today condemning someone to die by burning at the stake? What about by burning in such a way that it would take a week to die? A year? Forever?

What kind of justice is it that burns someone for eternity who did not even ask to be born, who did not commit any violent crime? It does great damage to the reality of a God of love to believe such concepts.

Is "hell" or punishment a good motivator to obey? How many people today are fully obedient to God despite the popular understanding of hell?

The wages of sin is death, not some process of dying that never ends.

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

Death comes from the sin itself, not from God. Further evidence:

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal 6:8)

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:15)

## No Consciousness in Hell

The popular idea of hell involves consciousness, yet:

"For the living know that they shall die: but **the dead know not any thing**, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." (Eccl 9:5)



"Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun." (Eccl 9:6)

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom*, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccl 9:10)

## The Lesser of Two Evils

Some people have replied as in a recent article I read:

"I think that I would actually like to know nothing through all eternity. Being nonexistent means I would have no more worries, no more problems – I would be at rest."

People think this way because they see it as a better alternative than burning forever which it certainly is. Compared to the traditional, never-ending hell, it is much preferred. However such people's motivation, in this case, is fear of torment. They are looking for the lesser of two evils.

But what a terrible loss – to miss eternity. Don't make a choice or do something you might later regret.

Rather, we need to weigh the alternatives – eternal death in oblivion or eternal life with God. The key is to get to know **His character** properly and to really fall in love with Him.

## But What About?

There are two parables spoken by Jesus that would seem, on the surface, to support the common concept of hell. However, a closer look reveals that this is not so and that His teaching on the subject was consistent with a God of love. See discussions of those parables at [The Rich Man and Lazarus](https://characterofgod.org/rich-man-lazarus/) (https://characterofgod.org/rich-man-lazarus/) and [The Wicked Servant in Hell](https://characterofgod.org/unforgiving-servant/) (https://characterofgod.org/unforgiving-servant/)

# Hiding the Face

Hiding the face – God hiding His face - is mentioned by Isaiah:

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God,  
and your sins have **hid his face** from you, that he will not hear." (Isa 59:2)

**Traditional Legal Model:** God is so offended by our sins that He cannot tolerate them and turns His holy face away from sins and sinners.

**Biblical Healing Model:** While sin hurts God, He loves the sinner and continues to give His attention to the sinner. However, it is the sinner who cannot "see" (in the sense of understanding and appreciating) God due to a misapprehension of His character.

God is sometimes described as hiding His face:

"Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I **will hide my face** from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us? And I **will surely hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods." (Deut 31:17-18)

In that passage, God is not hiding His face from Israel in order to punish them nor is it because He is angry as we understand anger (see anger/wrath definition). Rather, He is honoring their free-will choice to turn to other gods. God's reactions may also include an element of something we don't tend to think of in relation to God - grief.

"And he said, I **will hide my face** from them, I **will see** what their end *shall be*: for they *are* a very froward generation, children in whom *is* no faith." (Deut 32:20)

"Hide my face" is not saying He has turned away and abandoned them. He has not forsaken because He still sees ("I will see") what is going on; He does care and He is paying attention to saint and sinner alike all of whom are objects of His love.

## Who is Hiding?

The hiding of His face is not God's action. Although it is often attributed to Him, it is another case of [God being said to do what He merely allowed or did not prevent](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/).

(<https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/>) When man sins, he feels condemnation and guilt. When the sinner believes that God is condemning and requiring payment as appeasement for his sin, he is not seeing God clearly. He cannot see God as God really is (in

character). That such verses are not talking about literally seeing God with the eyes is shown by this verse:

"**No man hath seen God** at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*." (John 1:18)

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:9)

That seeing of the Father is not referring to physical sight; rather, it is a matter of "seeing" His character correctly. Saying that the Son has "declared Him" is not saying the Son had somehow made the Father visible to the eyesight. To "declare Him" is to make Him, His character known:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." (John 17:6)

See the definition of "**name**" which represents character.

## Hiding the Face or Hiding the Emotions?

The first mention of hiding the face, although not described using that term, is in the experience of Joseph when he was revealing himself to his brothers. And there was strong emotion with it.

"And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for **his bowels did yearn** upon his brother: and **he sought where to weep**; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread." (Gen 43:29-31)

The following short video segment from the excellent three-hour video on the life of Joseph shows this incident at the 5-minute mark: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruxuvOH1w00>)

Could it be that God, at times, hides His face in the same sense? Like looking for a place to weep? Here are verses suggestive of that possibility

"Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore **my bowels are troubled** for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD." (Jer 31:20)

"In all their affliction **he was afflicted**, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isa 63:9)

Here is a description of God hiding His face connected with His emotions:

"Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel told a story of Rabbi Dov Baer, who was walking on a street accompanied by his disciples and saw a little girl hiding in an alcove, weeping, 'Why are you crying, little girl?' asked the rabbi. She replied, 'I was playing hide-and-seek with my friends, but they didn't come looking for me!' Rabbi Dov Baer sighed and said to his students, 'In the answer and the tears of that little girl I heard the weeping of the Shekhinah, 'and I will surely hide my face.' I, God have hidden Myself too, as it were, but no one comes to look for Me." (adapted from Hebrew Word Study Revealing the Heart of God by Chaim Bentorah p283-5)

We have all possibly caused God to weep as He yearns over us. He is also looking to reveal Himself to us. As you study and understand His character more accurately you will begin to "see His face" more clearly.

# Holy

God is holy but that does not mean He wants to be separate from us unholy beings as many have suggested.

**Traditional Legal Model** – God is holy because of His perfection, His sinless purity and that He, being uncreated, is so much better than us created beings (mere mortals). As such, He cannot tolerate sin, unrighteousness or injustice and has to counter those with appropriate punishment while otherwise remaining separate from us.

**Biblical Healing Model** – What distinguishes God as holy is His perfect character. He is doing all He can to reveal that holy (and very attractive) character to us but His holiness and most everything about Him has been twisted and misunderstood. Correctly viewing His holiness will actually change us into the same image.

## Holy as Set Apart

The root word for holy in Hebrew is "qadash" (H6942) and in Greek "hagios" (G40). Those words mean “set apart, sacred, sanctified” and are so used in reference to items such as articles of the sanctuary, the priests etc that have a special or "holy" use. God is set apart (as in different) from us because of His Divine attributes and qualities as opposed to being merely human. Those would include His omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, His majesty, sinless purity and perfection of character.

## God's Holiness Misunderstood

Here is one **misunderstanding** of what it means for God to be holy:

"Propitiation is a big word that means satisfaction. **Because God is a holy God**, His anger and justice burns against sin. And **He has sworn that sin will be punished**.

There must be a satisfactory payment for sin. But God said, 'If I punish man for his sin, man will die and go to hell. On the other hand, **if I don't punish man for his sin, My justice will never be satisfied.**'

The solution? God said that He would become our substitute. He would take the sin of mankind upon Himself in agony and blood—a righteous judgment and substitute for sin."

(<https://www.christianity.com/jesus/following-jesus/repentance-faith-and-salvation/what-does-propitiation-mean.html>)

Christianity.com is where people might go if they weren't Christians and wanted to learn something about Christianity. Unfortunately, there is much wrong with what they present. Not to pick on that website; much in Christianity in general is wrongly understood and the cause is frequently the words that are used in ways that differ from the Biblical definitions. (This **Character of God and the Gospel Glossary** attempts to correct that by determining word meanings from how the Bible itself uses those words.)

## Is God so Holy He has to Separate from Sinners?

God's holiness is often misunderstood because of statements like this:

"God is holy means that He is absolutely **separate** from and exalted above all His creatures and creation, and He is **entirely separate** from all moral evil and sin." (**Henry C. Thiessen, theologian**)

Here is a verse that also could be seen to promote the idea that God is separated from us:

"For such an high priest became (G4241) us, *who is* **holy** (G3741), harmless, undefiled, **separate from sinners**, and made higher than the heavens;" (Heb 7:26)

The idea is that because he is holy, sinless, undefiled He has to stay separated from us. This can lead to the idea that He is aloof, distant, indifferent, withdrawn and not so emotionally involved. He is involved alright. He is keeping an eye on us.

However, the word "**holy**" (G3741) in that verse is not the usual word for holy (G40). It is actually close to "undefiled." For example, it is used in:

"Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine **Holy One** (G3741) to see corruption." (Acts 13:35)

The word "**harmless**" can also have that meaning:

### Harmless

172 ἄκακος akakos ak'-ak-os

from 1 (as a negative particle) and 2556; adj

AV-simple 1, harmless 1; 2

1) without guile or fraud, harmless, free from guilt

2) fearing no evil from others, distrusting no one

So "holy, harmless, undefiled" is really the way in which He is separate from sinners. He does not partake in our sins in any way. That is reflected in this verse:

"For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa 55:9)

The separation is about actions, not distance, not interest, not involvement or sympathy:

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin." (Heb 4:15)

That verse is expressed in a double negative but that can read awkwardly. I prefer to let the two negatives cancel each other out and see it like this:

"For we have an high priest who is very touched by our hurts and sorrows; but was in all points tempted like as we are (He knows by experience what that is like), yet without sin." (Heb 4:15, paraphrased)

That leads to this verse:

"**In all their affliction he was afflicted**, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isa 63:9)

So, he is actually very close to us as the Bible says:

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though **he be not far from every one of us:**" (Acts 17:27)

Did Jesus separate Himself from sinners? No. Neither Jesus nor His Father are so holy that they don't want to be around us. While our holy God is separate from sin, He certainly is not separate from sinners.

## Is God Too Holy to Look on Sin?

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and **canst not look on** iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" (Hab 1:13)

Many see this verse as saying that God is so offended by sin that He cannot look at it. Yet it also speaks of Him watching the wicked.

"God, your eyes are too pure to look **favorably** at evil or wickedness. So, how can you sit silently and watch the wicked swallowing up a people more righteous than them and do nothing about it?" (Hab 1:13, paraphrased)

Strong's concordance gives the definition for the Hebrew word ("nabat" H5027) translated "look" as: "look intently at; by implication to regard with pleasure, favor, or care." Thus, there are versions like this:

*"Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness **with favor**. Why dost Thou look **with favor** On those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?" (Hab 1:13, New American Standard Bible, 1977)*

God is not incapable of looking on sin. He knows what is going on. However, there is the idea within Christianity that says **God is too holy to look upon sin**. While its roots are in Calvinism, the idea has become widespread in Protestantism doing much harm, both theologically and psychologically. The practical effects of such a belief can cause Christians to shun those regarded as "sinful" because they think God is also shunning them.

That thinking is reflected in a comment that came to this website.

"Would the walk to Emmaus of 7 miles have been 'ok' to do on the Sabbath?"

The implication is that if that was an unholy act (due to the belief that there was a limit to how far one could walk on the Sabbath), the holy Jesus could not have walked with them.

My reply was:

"Suppose those two disciples were contravening even something Jesus observed. Suppose they were afraid of authorities coming after them where they were gathered, suppose they were leaving the group in discouragement. Wouldn't Jesus make a special effort to go after the lost sheep?"

We tend to act like the God or gods we believe in. If we think God is so holy that He can't look upon or be near sin because it disgusts Him so, we tend to act accordingly: we judge the so-called sinful and turn away from them.

That is why this is yet another misunderstanding of God's character that needs to be corrected. While we, sinners ourselves, are the ones who turn from those we deem as sinners, God is the One who goes looking for the sinners.



## Can We Be Holy?

"There is none holy **as** the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." (1 Sam 2:2)

The critical word in that verse is "as." While it is saying we cannot equal God's holiness it is not denying that we can achieve a degree of holiness:

*"But as he which hath called you is holy, **so be ye holy** in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."* (1 Peter 1:15-16)

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* **ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,**" (2 Peter 3:11)

God desires to see His own purity and holiness reflected in us that it may be a witness to others. I think of that saying:

"The greatest argument in favor of Christianity is a loving and lovable Christian."

We become like what we admire, what we focus on:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

These verses should encourage us to pursue holiness in ourselves:

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

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**, perfecting **holiness** in the fear of God." (2 Cor 7:1)

"To the end he may stablish **your hearts unblameable** in **holiness** before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thess 3:13)

## Why "Remove Shoes"?

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* **holy** ground." (Exo 3:5)

If we are going to be holy, if we are ever going to achieve it, one necessary thing is to be impressed with the importance of it.

"The practice of putting them [shoes] off before entering a temple, a palace, or even private houses has ever been a universal custom in the Near East. Since shoes or sandals carry dust and other impurities, the reverential Oriental mind considered it sacrilegious to enter a clean or holy place with shoes on." (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p510)

There is a little, in that description, of the idea that God would be offended by dirt in His presence. However, God's idea was to teach reverence. This was not because God needed to feel holy or exalted or like a king might want his subjects to show reverence. It was entirely for our benefit as that feeling of reverence (without fear) would tend to attract us to Him.

# Hornets

**Traditional Legal Model:** The stinging insects God said He would use to clear the land of its occupants so that His chosen people, the Israelites, could move in.

**Biblical Healing Model:** A metaphor for the "stings" of conscience that would, hopefully, influence the Canaanites to change their ways and, if they would not change, cause them to leave the land.

In the Bible, God told the Israelites that He would "send the hornet" to drive out the Canaanites from the land which would then make that land available for the Israelites to inhabit.

"**I will send my fear** before thee, and will **destroy** all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And **I will send hornets** before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." (Exo 23:27-28)

Note "destroy" (Hebrew "hamam" H2000) is usually translated as "**discomfited**." There would be no need to drive them out if "destroyed" meant they were killed.

What was the cause of them being discomfited and driven out?

"After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances." (Lev 18:3)

Apparently, they did not follow that direction. The following verses list their sins (mostly illicit sexual relations) but also including:

"And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD." (Lev 18:21)

Their sins were such as to cause a reaction in the land itself:

"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do **visit the iniquity** thereof upon it, and **the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants**." (Lev 18:24-25)

God told them to be careful to obey and not commit the abominations of the Canaanites or they would suffer the same fate:

"That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that *were* before you." (Lev 18:28)

Those nations were only "spued out" when they reached a certain level of sinfulness:

"But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full." (Gen 15:16)

The Amorites were the powerful and dominant tribe of the Canaanites (people who lived in Canaan).

The suggestion is that the land itself where they lived would react in such a way as to drive the people out - like the whole Earth is starting to do now in reaction to the wickedness of modern man.

Note the parallelism in the first passage we read, which is evidence that the hornets are a symbol for fear.

"**I will send my fear** before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And **I will send hornets** before thee, **which shall drive out** the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." (Exo 23:27-28)

**I will send fear = I will send hornets**

**fear = hornets**

"Send," in both cases, is "shalach" [H7971] which is **often used in the permissive sense**.

"And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and **thou shalt drive them out before thee**." (Exo 23:31)

Who or what is driving them out?

- "... **I will send** hornets before thee, which shall drive out ..." (verse 28)
- "... **thou** shalt drive them out before thee." (verse 31)

Why would the Israelites have to drive them out if the hornets were going to do it? Perhaps it was a two-step process:

1. God's part:

I will send my fear/hornets which shall drive out  
I will deliver the inhabitants ... into your hand

2. Israel's part:  
thou shalt drive them out

Did fear go before the Israelites as they began to occupy Canaan?

"And she [Rahab] said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that **your terror is fallen upon us**, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." (Josh 2:9)

Scripture indicates the fear got there before the armies of Israel did:

"There shall no man be able to stand before you: *for* the LORD your God shall lay the **fear** of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you." (Deut 11:25)

"Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; 2 That **they feared greatly**, because Gibeon *was* a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it *was* greater than Ai, and all the men thereof *were* mighty." (Josh 10:1-2)

I have this idea that the discomfiture, the fear was a response to God **smiting** their consciences and their failure to respond positively which they could have done. God's preferred way of doing away with His enemies is to turn them into His friends.

The hornet may be symbolic of something different; what we might call a "psyop," (a psychological operation or attack). In God's case, His mode of "attack" is an appeal to the conscience.

We read this before:

"And **I sent the hornet before you**, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but **not with thy sword**, nor with thy bow." (Joshua 24:12)

Note that the two kings of the Amorites would be driven out by **the hornet** and **not** by the force of Israelite swords. How can it say that? We have the record of history which says that the Israelites warred upon them successfully:

"And Israel **smote him with the edge of the sword**, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong." (Num 21:24)

"Him" there is "Sihon, king of the Amorites" (verse 21). Go down further in the chapter:

"So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people [the Amorites], until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land." (Num 21:35)

So, then, what does it mean, "but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow"? Following are opinions from two commentaries:

"It seems clear that the signal victory over these kings was not due to the skill of the sword and bow, but rather to the special blessing of God. **Hornets, then, seem to be figurative of the assistance God provided to give success to the armies of Israel.** The figure is appropriate. As hornets would produce consternation and panic in a camp, so the Lord would send fear, terror, quaking, and confusion into the camp of the nations to unnerve them for battle" (SDA BC; 2:296)

The emphasis there is to give Israel an advantage in their fighting. Here is another:

"And I will send hornets before thee, ... Which may be interpreted either figuratively, and so may signify **the same as fear** before which should fall on the Canaanites upon hearing the Israelites were coming; **the stings of their consciences** for their sins, **terrors of mind**, dreading the wrath of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard, and **terrible apprehensions** of ruin and destruction from the Israelites:" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible)

That commentary suggests the possibility of the stinging of their consciences.

Those people knew that their behavior was contrary to the God of the Israelites, and the approach of the Israelites (with whom the Canaanites would associate the God of Israel) would have had an effect on their consciences.

# Intercession

**Traditional Legal Model** – Intercession is what Christ does for us by pleading with His Father to convince the Father to release us from our debt of sin on account of Christ and save us from our due punishment.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Christ, with His Father, works for our benefit by combating the forces of evil, restraining harmful forces of nature and convicting us of sin and our need for salvation.

## From a Modern Dictionary:

### **Intercession** (noun)

1. an act or instance of interceding.
2. an interposing or pleading on behalf of another person.
3. a prayer to God on behalf of another.

([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

### **Intercession** (noun)

The act of interceding; mediation; interposition between parties at variance, with a view to reconciliation; prayer or solicitation to one party in favor of another, sometimes against another.

### **Intercede** (verb)

2. To mediate; to interpose; to make intercession; to act between parties with a view to reconcile those who differ or contend; usually followed by with.

### **Intercessor** (noun)

1. A mediator; one who interposes between parties at variance, with a view to reconcile them; one who pleads in behalf of another.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com>)

## Intercession for Who?

Consider these verses:

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom 8:26)

“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.” (Heb 7:25)

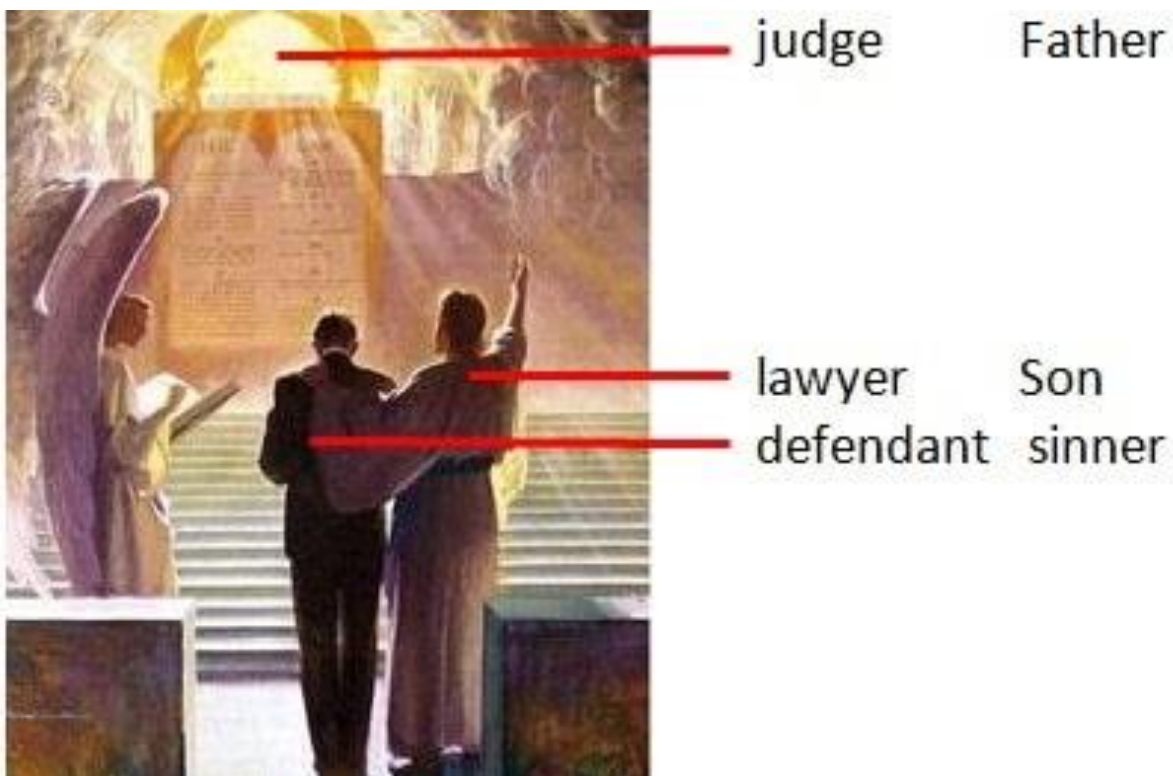
Note that, in that verse, the Savior ever intercedes and is able to save those that come to Him. While He is not able to save those who refuse to come that does not mean He is not still interceding for them.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:” (Heb 9:24)

Note the three verses quoted include “for us,” “for them,” “for us.” Each one points to Jesus’ ongoing work in heaven as our intercessor, advocate or mediator to intercede (advocate, mediate) for us. The intercession for someone is to intercede for their benefit. To intercede with someone is generally understood as to speak to them in an attempt to have them change their position in regard to a situation or relationship with another person. There are three entities involved. The intercessor intercedes with someone for (the benefit of) someone else.

Typical understandings often go like this: When we sin, Jesus pleads with the Father to forgive us. In that case, the pleading is with the Father to get Him to change. However, God does not need to change His attitude towards us. He is always, loving, always forgiving, always ready and willing to receive us.

## Intercession Involves Three Parties





To intercede with someone is generally understood as to speak to them in an attempt to have them change their position in regard to a situation or relationship with another person.

Most commonly, it would be thought of like this:

- An **intercessor** (**lawyer**) intercedes by acting or speaking in some way
- to bring about a change in someone or something (**judge**)
- for the benefit of someone else (**defendant**).

	<b>Earthly</b>	<b>Heavenly</b>
The intercessor intercedes	lawyer	Son
with someone	judge	Father
in behalf of another	defendant	sinner

It doesn't have to be a court room scene. Mom could intercede with Dad to not go golfing with his buddies but to take their son fishing instead. Better to say interceding towards (rather than with) Dad (to whom the intercession is directed) on behalf of the son. Once in agreement, Dad might say to Mom: "Okay, I'm with you."

## God Does Not Need to be Convinced to Love Us

Is Jesus in heaven pleading with His Father to accept and save us? Does He have to convince His Father to go easy on us? What do the scriptures say about the Father's attitude toward us sinners?

"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John 16:26-27)

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?" (Rom 8:31-32)

The idea that the Son pleads to the Father is not stated in the Bible. The goal of intercession is to bring us to God; not to shield us from Him.

## The Father is Also Interceding

Jesus is not pleading with the Father to convince Him to be gracious to us although this verse can sound like that:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:” (1 John 2:1)

Note that (among other options) the word “with” can mean:

1. Accompanied by; accompanying
  11. against, as in opposition or competition
- (www.dictionary.com)

So, while “with” could indicate Jesus is trying to convince God to change His mind in regard to us, it could also mean that Jesus is working “with” (or alongside) the Father for our benefit, to get us to change, to lead us to reconciliation. Such a meaning would be consistent with:

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Rom 8:27)

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom 8:34)

The Father also makes intercession for us. If the second “who” in Rom 8:34 is referring to the Son it still includes the Father by use of the word “also.” There is more than one involved.

Romans 8 says directly that God is interceding for us; it is God’s will. We need to remember that the object of intercession, the work of an advocate or mediator is to reconcile two parties, to bring them to a state of oneness (the original and correct meaning of **atonement**). It is also vital to remember that, in this case, the reconciliation is one-way:

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Cor 5:19)

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” (Rom 5:10)

It is us that need to be reconciled to God; never God to us. “The Bible nowhere mentions God’s being reconciled to man.” (SDA Bible Commentary Vol. 6, p528, 1956 edition)

## In What Ways Does God Intercede for Us?

This intercession on our behalf, for our good, is accomplished on several levels:

1. Interceding for us by holding back the forces of evil:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor 10:13)

2. Interceding for us by restraining and protecting us from the forces of nature:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.” (Rev 7:1)

3. Interceding for us by convicting us to change our ways:

“And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:8)

4. Interceding for us by drawing us to Himself:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

See the **intercessor definition** for more detail and illustrations of the role of an intercessor.

# Intercessor

**Traditional Legal Model** – The intercessor, Christ, works on our behalf because we are not capable of dealing directly with the Father, the Divine Judge. Being both man and God, Jesus can bridge the gap and plead our case.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Christ functions as Intercessor for our benefit in a number of ways but certainly not to defend us against a strict Judge. The Father Himself is also an intercessor on our behalf.

## From a Modern Dictionary:

**Intercessor** (noun)  
a person who intercedes.

**Intercede** (verb)  
to act or interpose in behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble, as by pleading or petition: to intercede with the governor for a condemned man.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Intercessor** (noun)  
A mediator; one who interposes between parties at variance, with a view to reconcile them; one who pleads in behalf of another.  
([www.webstersdictionary1828.com](http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com))

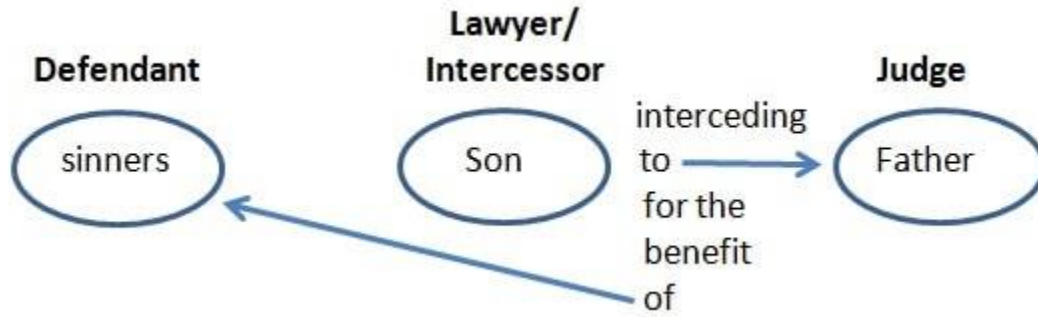
**Note** that included in this definition of intercessor is some discussion of the similar words **mediator** and **advocate**:

“For there is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”  
(1 Tim 2:5)

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:” (1 John 2:1)

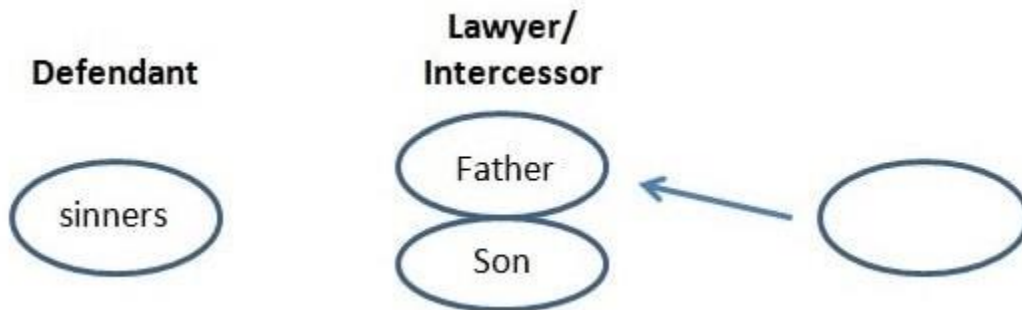
## Three Parties Involved

The three parties involved in the process of intercession (see **intercession definition**) are commonly thought of like this:

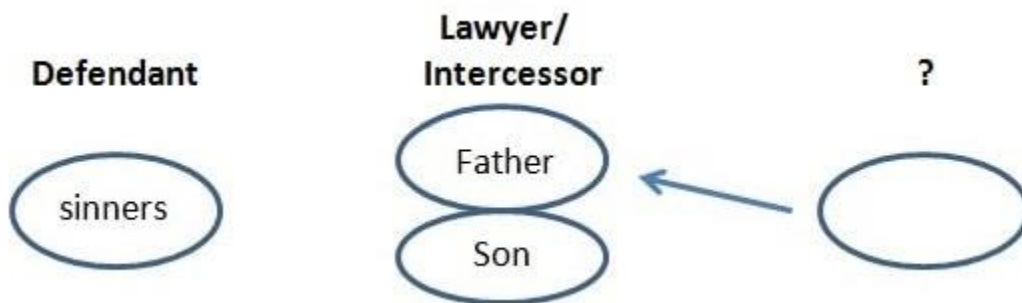


But Jesus is our advocate **with** the Father (1 John 2:1). They're both on our side. To say the Son has to convince the Father to let us off the hook is to split the Father and the Son and put a division between them. That never happens. They are in complete unity at all times.

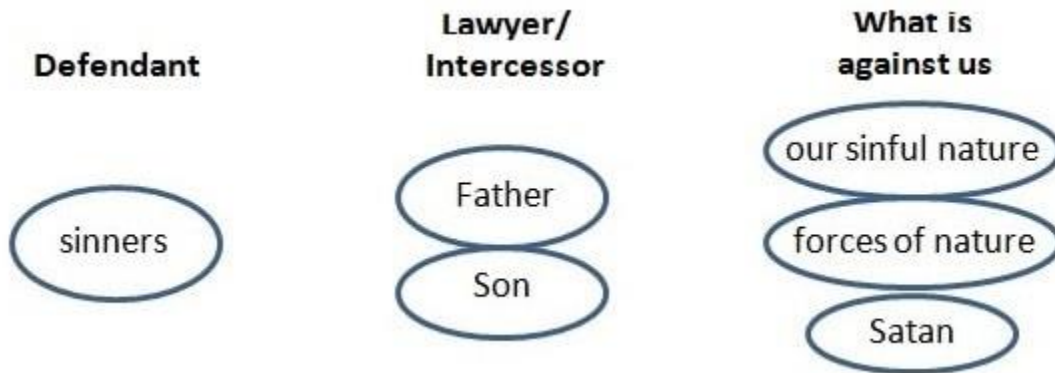
If the Father is advocating **with** His Son for our benefit then they are both functioning in the role of intercessor:



They are both on our side. The Son is not between us and the Father in the sense of having to influence His Father to have a favorable attitude towards us. Then to who or what is their intercession directed on our behalf?



Both Father and Son are always working, throughout our lives to intercede for us, to defend and protect us from:



They hold back or intercede on (at least) three levels:

**1. Our sinful nature** via our conscience:

“And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:” (John 16:8)

The Spirit of Christ does this by drawing us to Himself:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

**2. The forces of nature**, for example:

“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, **wherein were fiery serpents**, and scorpions, and drought ...” (Deut 8:15)

Note that many get confused about that because of this verse:

“And the LORD **sent fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.” (Num 21:6)

What happened in that incident is that God was acting as intercessor in the sense of holding back or restraining the serpents that were already abundant in that area of the wilderness. When the people, through their attitude, refused God’s intercession, He complied with their wishes by ceasing His intercession with the result that the serpents were not restrained from doing what they normally did. The word “sent” is from the Hebrew “shalach” which can mean “to let go,” or “to allow.”

Another example:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow [interceding to restrain destructive forces] on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.” (Rev 7:1)

The four winds, symbolic of destruction, are held back to prevent harm (verse 3).

God is actually interceding at every moment against the force of entropy by which, according to the second law of thermodynamics, all things tend to disorder and chaos:

“Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things** by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb 1:3)

**3. Satan** seeking whom he may devour:

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking whom he may devour:**” (1 Pet 5:8)

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor 10:13)

So, Jesus, our Intercessor is working on our behalf to protect from Satan, to protect from forces of nature and to subdue our sinful nature which can also harm us.

## An Important Role of the Intercessor

There is one other important way in which He is interceding with us. That is in regard to our attitude towards God – to get us to love and trust His Father. That relates to this verse:

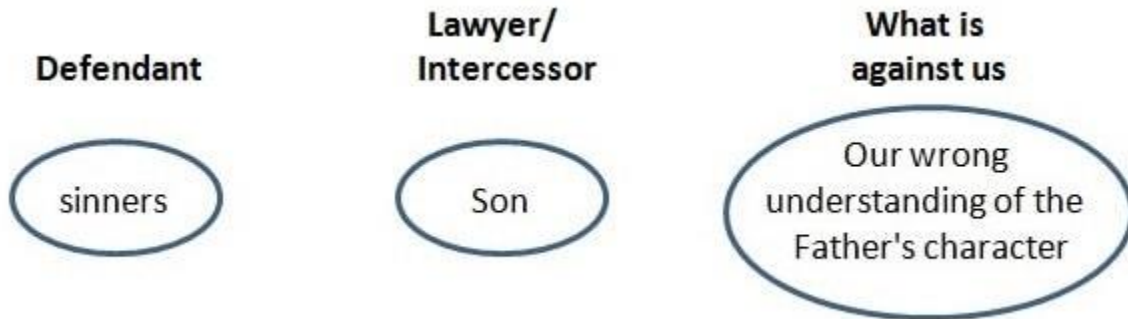
“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” (1 Tim 2:5)

Some might say “see there is only **one** mediator and He, Jesus, is between us and the Father. Another verse sounds similar:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

However, that doesn’t mean that God is not also on our side. But God’s character has been darkened by Satan’s accusations and there is one “Man” in particular Who can reconnect God and mankind through the life He lived on earth as the representative of His Father’s character.

In that case, it is the Son interceding in behalf of sinners regarding their wrong understanding of the Father’s character. Remember, intercession is directed towards someone or something on behalf of another. The intercession here is directed at our wrong understanding, attempting to change that towards the truth of His Father’s character for our benefit.



That Jesus has been given that role is shown by this verse:

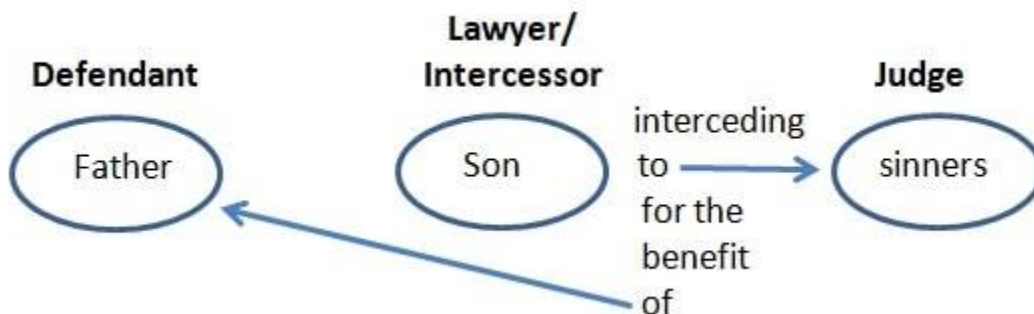
“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:2-3)

“Power” there is, from the Greek word “exousia” meaning more like authority than the power of strength from the Greek work “dunamis.” One definition of “exousia” in Strong’s concordance is “the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege).” Christ was given the right and authority as His Father’s representative to show the true character of God. And how does He give eternal life? By helping people to know the only true God which knowledge the verse equates with eternal life.

“For there is only one God and one reconnecting bridge — one emissary from God to the human race—the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself to free us from **the bondage of lies about God** and from our own selfish natures. His sacrifice proves that God wants everyone to be healed.” (1 Tim 2:5-6, The Remedy New Testament)

## Summary

I would summarize the meaning of an intercessor to be a person who works to influence someone or something else (including even a belief or understanding) for the benefit of another. Christ is our intercessor in more ways than we can know. He could also be said to be an intercessor regarding His work to change us for the benefit of His Father.





So, there is a way in which Jesus is an intercessor between us and the Father after all. (Be sure to notice the difference between the diagram just above and the first one on this page.) However, that intercession (pleading, demonstrating, drawing etc) is towards us to get us to change our understanding of God's character; to change our attitude and to look with favor upon God. It is we that need to change, not God.

Jesus is interceding between us and the Father but the work of intercession is on us not on the Father to get us to correctly judge the Father not to get Him to favorably judge us. The Bible tells us clearly that it is God who is being judged:

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome **when thou art judged.**"  
(Rom 3:4)

Verses that sound like God is judging us are referring to:

- His judgments in the diagnostic sense - what is wrong with them (mostly their thinking) that needs to be fixed?
- His judgments in the therapeutic sense - what needs to be done to help them?
- NOT to His judgments in the judicial (forensic) sense - why and how should I punish them?

We forget that there are **various meanings to judging**. We judge fruit at the store as we are deciding which ones to put in our shopping basket. We judge the seriousness of an injury/illness when we are deciding on a treatment option.

# Jealousy

A jealous God implies a need or desire in God that He cannot fulfill. In many verses that emotion in God is connected to idolatry:

"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:" (Exo 34:14)

**Traditional Legal Model:** God wants to be worshipped as the supreme being and therefore commands us to worship Him only. Worship of anything or anyone else makes Him jealous of that competition for worship.

**Biblical Healing Model:** When someone is bowing before an idol God is not jealous of the idol in the sense that He feels the loss of something the idol is receiving instead of Him getting it. His jealousy, His concern is for the one bowing and looking to another source for what he needs when only God can provide it.

Can you imagine the Creator God being jealous of an idol made of stone? That doesn't make sense.

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." (Psa 50:10-12)

This comment reflects the common but totally wrong understanding of God's jealousy:

"... that the one Only God ... should claim and exact under severe penalties an undivided allegiance is natural, reasonable, and in harmony with the most exalted conceptions of the Divine essence." (Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, comment on Exo 34:14)

If God cannot fulfill His desire for us to follow Him and His ways of our own free will without using some kind of force or threats of force then He cannot be a God of love.

## Dictionary.com

Jealous (adjective)

1. feeling resentment against someone because of that person's rivalry, success, or advantages (often followed by of): (dictionary.com)
6. Bible. intolerant of unfaithfulness or rivalry: The Lord is a jealous God.

## Webster (1828)

Jealous (adjective)

1. Suspicious; apprehensive of rivalry; uneasy through fear that another has withdrawn or may withdraw from one the affections of a person he loves, or enjoy some good which he desires to obtain; followed by *of*, and **applied both to the object of love and to the rival**. We say, a young man is *jealous of* the woman he loves, or *jealous of* his rival ...

4. Solicitous to defend the honor of; **concerned for the character of**.

I have been very *jealous* for the Lord God of hosts. 1 Kings 19:10.

5. Suspiciously vigilant; anxiously careful and concerned for.

I am *jealous* over you with a godly jealousy. 2 Corinthians 11:2.

(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/jealous>)

Webster's definitions are much closer to the Biblical meaning of the word when applied to God. This is an example of how word meanings have changed from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the reason that this glossary examines Webster's 1828 dictionary.

This verse indicates that the form of jealousy God feels is different than what man experiences:

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor 11:2)

The context shows that Paul's concern was for the Corinthians rather than for himself as in Webster's fifth point above.

## A Jealous God According to the Bible

What does the Bible say? Is He a jealous God? Here are verses showing that God's jealousy is (commonly in Scripture) connected to men falling into idolatry.

"For thou shalt worship **no other god**: for **the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**:" (Exo 34:14)

"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you **a graven image**, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even **a jealous God**." (Deut 4:23-24)

"Thou shalt have no **other gods** before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any **graven image**, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for **I the LORD thy God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;" (Exo 20:3-5)

The word "am" in verse five is supplied. The verse could actually have the meaning that God will **become** a jealous God. "Become" in the sense of appearing to be or to act in a certain way **in the perception of others**. Of course, God does not change but people's perception of Him can change.

People think God is jealous of, for example, an idol, because the idol is getting the attention. And God does become jealous but in a different sense - that of godly jealousy - as discussed earlier. People tend to perceive God according to their understanding of His character which is often colored by their own character.

"And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount **in the eyes of the children** of Israel." (Exo 24:17)

Their reaction was fear yet Moses was not at all afraid. Read the next verse:

"And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." (Exo 24:18)

Why did the children of Israel have that perception? It had everything to do with their understanding of the true God in particular and gods in general - that they were to be feared and appeased.

Here is a verse speaking of perception:

"But Noah found grace **in the eyes of** the LORD." (Gen 6:8)

The grace was always there. Noah found or experienced what was already freely offered. God always offers grace and mercy:

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for **his mercy endureth** for ever." (1 Chron 16:34)

This verse speaks of people perceiving God according to their own characters:

"With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward." (Psa 18:25-26)

## A Jealous God Reacts to Idolatry

What does God do in reaction to idolatry which is the free-will choice to follow another god? Exodus 20:5 says that He visits the iniquity (allows the consequences) or honors the free will choice.

<b>idolatry</b>	<b>jealousy</b>	<b>visiting the iniquity</b>
people going after other gods	God's concern for the welfare of all people who are not following Him, the only source of life	God honoring the free will choices of His people allowing them to receive the results they have chosen

See **the definition of visit** for more on this meaning.

God's jealous reaction is also described as involving anger:

"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after **other gods**, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a **jealous God** among you) **lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee**, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." (Deut 6:13-15)

There are often multiple words that need to be correctly understood to get the right meaning. God, in **anger** accommodates man's decisions or allows the natural consequences (the law of sowing and reaping) to play out.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for **whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**" (Gal 6:7)

But in doing that, He is often allowing mankind to suffer negative consequences and His jealousy is out of His concern for our condition.

Here is another passage linking God's jealousy to idolatry:

"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee. For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." (Deut 4:23-24)

The page <https://characterofgod.org/biblical-meaning-of-fire/> has a good explanation of the Biblical meaning of "**consuming fire**." It is not what you think.

### **The Jealous God Hides His Face**

Another reaction of God connected to His jealousy in cases of idolatry is to hide His face:

"They provoked him to **jealousy** with **strange gods**, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to **new gods** that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD

saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, **I will hide my face from them**, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." (Deut 32:16-20)

The meaning of **hiding the face** by God in such circumstances is figurative rather than literal. Read more about the meaning of this phrase.

God's jealousy does not include any resentment, bad feelings towards others or concern for self. His jealousy is more an expression of sorrow that the object of His love is hurting self by turning away from God which can only result in hurt or loss as God is the only source of life.

# Judgment

**Traditional Legal Model** – judgment is the legal determination of guilt or innocence and pronouncement of arbitrarily-imposed punishment to match the crime which is understood to be death in every case of unresolved sin – “The wages of sin is death...” (Rom 6:23)

**Biblical Healing Model** – Judgment is not so much legal as it is relational. We form an opinion (see definition below) about God or pass judgment on His character (Rom 3:4). His judgment of us consists of three parts:

- **Diagnosis** – the determination of the state of the heart between persons or between man and God
- **Therapeutic interventions** one form is as in “to judge the fatherless” (Psa 10:18)
- **Pronouncement** of the natural result or outcome.

**Definitions** There are a number of meanings of judgment. Below are included those most general and most applicable to scripture.

## Modern Dictionary

### Judgment (noun):

**4.** The forming of an opinion, estimate, notion, or conclusion, as from circumstances presented to the mind: Our judgment as to the cause of his failure must rest on the evidence.”

**8.** (usually initial capital letter) Also called Last Judgment, Final Judgment. the final trial of all people, both the living and dead, at the end of the world.

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/judgment?s=t>)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

**1.** The faculty of the mind by which man is enabled to compare ideas and ascertain the relations of terms and propositions; as a man of clear judgment or sound judgment. The judgment may be biased by prejudice. Judgment supplies the want of certain knowledge.

**10.** The righteous statutes and commandments of God are called his judgments. Psalms 119:66.

**17.** The final trial of the human race, when God will decide the fate of every individual, and award sentence according to justice.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/judgment>)

## Judgment is Both an Act and a Result

It is helpful to realize that “judgment” can refer to both an act and the result of that act. For example, we could say “The judge passed judgment (verb, the act of deciding guilt or innocence) on the accused and his judgment (noun, the result of the decision) was “guilty.” However, in Greek, there are separate words for the action and its result:

**Krisis** (noun, Strong’s G2920) the act of judging

**Krima** (noun, Strong’s G2917) the result of judging

Both words are related to the verb form:

**Krino** (verb, Strong’s G2919)

Thus, in scripture, we can have Jesus saying both:

“Ye judge (**krino**) after the flesh; **I judge (krino) no man.**” (John 8:15)

and

“... **For judgment (krima) I am come into this world**, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” (John 9:39)

Jesus does not judge – pass judgment (the act – **krisis**). However, because of the spiritual light and truth He shared, many people, both in His day and ours, formed opinions (judgments; the result – **krima**) that will even affect their eternal destinies. This result was predicted by Simeon at Jesus’ baptism:

“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for **the fall and rising again of many** in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;” (Luke 2:34)

Read an article looking at the question [Does God judge us or do we judge Him?](https://characterofgod.org/we-judge-him/)  
(<https://characterofgod.org/we-judge-him/>)

## How Does God Judge?

God judges by allowing us to receive the natural consequences of our actions. For example:

“The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.” (Psa 9:15-16)



More verses that say [judgment of sin comes from its consequences](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/>)

## I Judge no Man

In John chapter 8, Jesus made some statements that could be seen to contradict each other:

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; **I judge no man**. And yet **if I judge**, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.” (John 8:14-16)

Is “if I judge” a contradiction of “I judge no man”? Not really; “I judge no man” is saying that Jesus does not pass judgement on others. “If I judge” could include judgment other than on other people. We judge and form opinions on many things other than people and their state of salvation or condemnation. Also, because Jesus could read the heart and have all evidence and motives available to Him He could, if He chose to, judge truly.

## Jesus’ Opportunity to Judge

John chapter 8 also provides a good example of where Jesus had an opportunity to judge, to condemn someone for wrong, yet He did not; He only extended mercy. See especially the first 3 minutes of this video:



Watch the YouTube Video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBl3XBuk96Y>

“... Execute true judgment, and shew mercy ...” (Zech 7:9)

## Just as in “A Just Man”

### Traditional Legal Model

There is some variation in understanding:

- From the Jewish point of view a ‘just man’ was a strict observer of the laws of Moses and of rabbinical traditions.” (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, p283)
- Proverb 20:7 says “The just *man* walketh in his integrity ...” The just man has a sound, upright and consistent moral character.
- Some would view a just man as one who is always obedient; viewed as perfect in God’s eyes

### Biblical Healing Model

A just man is one who has been set right or **justified** in his relationship with God. A right relationship with God can only be established with a correct understanding of His character and an acceptance and reflection of that in our own lives.

**For definitions from a Modern Dictionary and Webster’s 1828 Dictionary** see the entry for “**Just**” as in “**God is Just.**”

There are verses in both Proverbs (9:9, 20:7 and 24:16) and Ecclesiastes (7:15, 20) that describe a just man. Other verses name individuals who were described as just.

## Just Persons in the Bible

“These *are* the generations of **Noah**: Noah was a **just** (Hebrew: tsaddiyq; Strong’s H6662) man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.” (Gen 6:9)

The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) translates the word rendered as “just” in Gen 6:9 as “dikaios” (G1342) occurrences of which in the New Testament are translated in 74 of 81 uses as “righteous” or “just.”

“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen **righteous** (H6662) before me in this generation.” (Gen 7:1)

“Then **Joseph** her husband, being a **just** (G1342, dikaios) *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.” (Matt 1:19)

“And they [**Zacharias and Elizabeth**] were both **righteous** (G1342) before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (Luke 1:6)

Interesting that Zacharias was disciplined (verse 20) because he did not believe the words of the message from the angel of the Lord. Here is [The Remedy New Testament](http://comeandreason.com/rem/) (http://comeandreason.com/rem/) version of the verse above:

“Both he and his wife **trusted God**, had renewed hearts, and lived in harmony with God’s methods and principles.” (Luke 1:6, The Remedy New Testament)

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simeon**; and the same man was **just** (G1342) and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” (Luke 2:25)

“And, behold, *there was* a man named **Joseph**, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man, and a **just** (G1342):” (Luke 23:50)

“And they said, **Cornelius** the centurion, a just (G1342) man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.” (Acts 10:22)

“And delivered just (G1342) **Lot**, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that **righteous** (G1342) man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)” (2 Pet 2:7-8)

Interesting that in the passage above, “just” and “righteous” are from the same Greek word. Here is The Remedy New Testament version of that:

“and God delivered Lot—a man who **partook of the Remedy** and was tormented by the disgusting lives of those living in violation of God’s design—for it was torture for that man **with a healed mind and sensitive heart** to live day after day among such vileness and see and hear such vulgarity.” (2 Peter 2:7-8, The Remedy New Testament)

But what did “just” Lot do? Basically, he offered his two virgin daughters as sacrifices:

“Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.” (Gen 19:8)

## Does a Just Man Sin?

Along with clues from verses above, here is a verse that can shed some light on what it means to be a just man:

"For *there is* not a **just** (H6662) man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccl 7:20)

In this verse also, the Septuagint uses the word "dikaioi" (G1342) for "just."

It is helpful when looking at a sentence with a double negative (as in the verse above) to allow the two negatives to cancel each other out. Thus, we get:

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

So, there are just men on earth who do good but they still sin and still have sinful natures. The point is that **being just does not equate with absolute perfection**. God is looking first to establish a right relationship with us, and then the improvements in character (aiming for perfection) will follow. That priority is reflected in this verse:

"I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)

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### A "just" person may still fall into sin.

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All those just men in the verses listed earlier were just in that they were right with God but that is not saying they were perfect and never sinned. Here is a verse sometimes used to support calls for sinless perfection:

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt 5:48)

But consider the corresponding verse from the same conversation as reported by Luke:

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:36)

The word translated "merciful" means exactly that, where the word translated "perfect" in Matt 5:48 is the Greek "teleios" which means not perfect as we might think of it but "brought to its end" or "finished" or "complete." It could be "mature" as in "grow up and start treating people like God does – with mercy."

Emphasizing perfection ahead of the relationship causes people to focus on their behavior rather than their relationship with God. Be assured that you can be just in God's eyes, (Noah, Lot, Joseph, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon, Joseph of Arimathea and Cornelius were) even though you have a sinful nature and occasionally fall.

Here is another version of the first verse in this section:

“Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning.” (Eccl 7:20, New Revised Standard Version)

This verse also supports that a just man is not necessarily perfect:

“For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Pro 24:16)

A just man can fall. David fell into sin but made it right with God. He remembered the character of God and pled:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” (Psa 51:1)

David did not offer a sacrifice (nor is it said he was told to) but note what he did offer:

“The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Psa 51:17)

## Relation to God’s Character

God is not demanding perfection to have a relationship with us. He is more concerned about first establishing the relationship. Having said that, perfection, whatever that means, is His ideal. He wants to heal us of our imperfections for our good because sin hurts His children. We just need to put our efforts in the right place. It is through having the relationship with Jesus as our example that we are changed:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

As we behold the glory – the character – of the Lord we are changed to become more like Him – a just man or woman.

# Just as in "God is Just"

## Traditional Legal Model

Most sources will mention one or both of two ways to understand God is just:

- “For God to be *just* means that he is consistent, virtuous, innocent, and right.”  
(<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/what-does-it-mean-that-god-is-just.html>)
- “if God is fully just, He must punish our sins fully without holding back”  
(<http://www.thefellowship.site/blog/2016/11/18/god-of-paradox-merciful-and-just>)

The emphasis between the two concepts will vary from one source to another but both understandings are commonly held.

## Biblical Healing Model

God is just in that He always does the right thing agreeing with the first definition listed above. What is right from His character of love includes honoring the free will of others allowing complete freedom of choice without force or any threat. When we choose wrong, He freely allows us to have the consequences we have (knowingly or unknowingly) chosen. “You reap what you sow.” That is the sense in which God “**punishes**” sin contrary to the second definition above.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Just (adjective)

1 guided by truth, reason, justice, and fairness

5 given or awarded rightly; deserved, as a sentence, punishment, or reward

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/just?s=t>)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### Just (adjective)

5 In a moral sense, upright; honest; having principles of rectitude; or conforming exactly to the laws, and to principles of rectitude in social conduct; equitable in the distribution of justice; as a *just* judge.

11 Equitable; due; merited; as a *just* recompense or reward.

—Whose damnation is *just* Romans 3:8.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/just>)


## Are “Just” and “Merciful” in Opposition?

Here is one statement reflecting an understanding of God being just:


“God cannot be both wholly merciful and just. If God is entirely merciful, He must let us evade the consequences of our sin, and He will not be just since sin goes unpunished. On the other hand, if God is fully just, He must punish our sin fully without holding back and that would mean that He is unmerciful! How is this possible?”  
(<http://www.thefellowship.site/blog/2016/11/18/god-of-paradox-merciful-and-just>)

That understanding is that if God is just, He must punish every sin. He has to do it to maintain that quality of His character. An obvious question is: are we understanding the meaning of “just” correctly in this context? How does God being just relate to His character? Following is an attempt to answer these questions.

“Just” is an adjective describing a quality of God, like God is patient. The understanding “if God is fully just, He must punish our sins” (as in the quote above) could be diagrammed like this:

Just (adjective) = God always executing justice  
  
 God

It is making God answerable to justice (to always do the just thing) as though justice (being just) was a higher power that He must satisfy. The Bible never makes God answerable to justice as it is often understood. Nor does it actually use the phrase “God is just.” But it does say “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

Love (noun) = His very essence  
  
 God

In this case, God is not answerable to anything above Him, however He will always act consistently with His own character described by “God is love.”

So which – justice or love – is God more answerable to? Which – to be just or to be loving – can He not help doing? Here is one description of love (The KJV uses “charity” but the Greek word is “agape” – the most selfless form of love.):

“Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily

provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1 Cor 13:4-7)

I would say that list is more in line with mercy than with justice. It is interesting to note that “thinketh no evil” in many versions is translated similar to this:

“or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.” (1 Cor 13:5, New Living Translation)

While God is omniscient and does not forget anything, He does not keep track of wrongs with the intent to impose punishment for each wrong act. That does not line up with “He must punish our sins fully.”

So what does it mean to be just?

## A Just God in Scripture

“He is the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.” (Deut 32:4)

“Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.” (Isa 45:21)

The word “just” in those two verses is from the Hebrew word “tsaddiyq” (H6662) which is most often translated as “righteous.” In the New Testament, “just” is from the Greek word “dikaios” (G1342):

“And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.” (Acts 22:14)

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.” (Rev 15:3)

We need to understand what it means to be just, to act justly, keeping in mind that God is love. The Hebrew and Greek words translated as “just” in the four verses above are more frequently translated as “righteous” simply meaning to do what is right. The Septuagint uses “dikaios” (G1342) for “just” in both of the Old Testament verses quoted.

How does doing what is right relate to the “God is just” understanding of the Traditional Legal Model? Many think a just God must judge the legality of each act, condemn all violations of the law and execute justice (punishment) for every sin. But consider these verses:



“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:” (John 5:22)

“Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.” (John 8:15)

Read “[Judge Not, that Ye be Not Judged](https://characterofgod.org/judge-not/)” (<https://characterofgod.org/judge-not/>) for more about judging. Then read the story “[The Pesticides in the Garage](https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/)” (<https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/>) as an illustration of the true meaning of justice.

## Summary

So “God is just” is really a reference to His characteristic of always doing the right thing and the right thing to do in any situation is determined from His “governing” quality – the attribute of love.

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom 13:10)

# Justice

**Traditional Legal Model** – justice demands the penalty/wages of death and eternal separation from God. It is only satisfied if the guilty person pays that penalty or if someone else pays on his behalf. Justice is retributive.

**Biblical Healing Model** – justice is doing the right thing which is to restore to a right state, to heal and to save. It is right to treat others as we would wish to be treated, to not hold grudges and to not keep account of sins. Justice is restorative.

Note that this study links to several supporting articles (which open in new browser windows) to avoid this page being too long. For a more complete understanding please read those, preferably as you come to the links for them below.



Louis Johnson, used by permission

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

### Justice (noun)

1. The virtue which consists in giving to every one what is his due; practical conformity to the laws and to principles of rectitude in the dealings of men with each other; honesty; integrity in commerce or mutual intercourse. *justice* is distributive or commutative.

Distributive *justice* belongs to magistrates or rulers, and consists in distributing to every man that right or equity which the laws and the principles of equity require; or in deciding controversies according to the laws and to principles of equity.

Commutative *justice* consists in fair dealing in trade and mutual intercourse between man and man.

2. Impartiality; equal distribution of right in expressing opinions; fair representation of facts respecting merit or demerit. In criticisms, narrations, history or discourse, it is a duty to do *justice* to every man, whether friend or foe.

3. Equity; agreeableness to right; as, he proved the *justice* of his claim. This should, in strictness, be justness.

4. Vindictive retribution; merited punishment. Sooner or later, *justice* overtakes the criminal.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/justice>, accessed Jan. 25, 2018)

### Modern Dictionary Definition

**Justice** (noun)

1. the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness: to uphold the justice of a cause.

2. rightfulness or lawfulness, as of a claim or title; justness of ground or reason: to complain with justice.

3. the moral principle determining just conduct.

4. conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct; just conduct, dealing, or treatment.

5. the administering of deserved punishment or reward.

([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Jan. 25, 2018)

In both Webster's 1828 and a modern dictionary, the definition that equates with punishment is only number 4 or 5. Somehow, and notably in spiritual discussions, justice seems to be equated with penalties, retribution, the punishment of wrongdoing.

The common understanding of words changes over time. Something like the famous words of former U.S. President George W. Bush (after the 9/11 attack) can have a great effect:

"Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done."

There is no doubt that the intent there was all about retribution.

## Types of Justice

But does Biblical justice include more than retribution for wrong deeds? Are there even different types of justice? Please read this article describing [types of justice](https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/) (<https://characterofgod.org/types-justice/>) (opens in new window) and then return here.



To combine two meanings of the word: is it justice (the right thing to do) to do justice (retributive correction)? That depends upon which law lens you are looking through; which understanding of the God's law you have. Is God's law natural – meant to protect us; for our benefit? Or is it God's set of rules to which He requires strict obedience and must justly punish disobedience? See the definition of "**law**."

It helps to understand this to look at the story of [The Stoning of David](https://characterofgod.org/stoning-david/) (<https://characterofgod.org/stoning-david/>). How did God administer justice to David and what was His goal as He dealt with the serious sins of this "man after God's own heart"?

As in many cases, it helps to understand a word's meaning by examining every Biblical use. Let's take a look at [every Biblical use of "justice"](https://characterofgod.org/justice-verses/) (<https://characterofgod.org/justice-verses/>). It seems, from examining those verses, that God's justice is more concerned about delivering the oppressed and treating people equally than about punishing wrongdoers. In fact, there are **no** verses using the word "justice" (KJV) which support that justice means to punish sin. The similar term "judgment" will be covered in the definition for that term.

In discussions of God's character, it is often said that "God is love but He is also just." That saying is found nowhere in the Bible. It does say that God is love and it does say that God is just (Deut 32:4, Isa 45:21). However, combining them with the "but" puts the two in opposition. It suggests the idea that God is love but if you cross Him, watch out – He will change His attitude towards you and show His just side. As I said, the Bible does say God is just, but every use of just or justice reflects a loving action. It will say to show justice to the poor, to widows or the old. Never does it reflect the idea of retribution as many suggest.

## More on the Meaning of Justice

Here is a very good article on the [meaning of justice](http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2014/06/06/how-the-bible-understands-justice/32339) (<http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2014/06/06/how-the-bible-understands-justice/32339>). I believe these two lines from that article very well express true justice from God's perspective:

"The clear meaning of 'justice' is 'what is right' or 'what is normal' — the way things are supposed to be."

“So justice, most simply, means putting things right again — fixing, repairing, and restoring broken relationships.”

Another article by guest author [David Lorencin](https://characterofgod.org/david-kelley-lorencin/) (<https://characterofgod.org/david-kelley-lorencin/>) explores the [connection between justice and wrath](https://characterofgod.org/justice-david-lorencin/) (<https://characterofgod.org/justice-david-lorencin/>).

## An Eye for an Eye

Finally, some will want to question how justice fits with the idea of “an eye for an eye” – now that sound like justice! The question is was Moses giving a law or setting a limit? Understanding that God’s revelation of light is progressive (as we are able to bear it) and that Jesus is the ultimate expression of the character of God let’s see [what Jesus said about an eye for an eye](https://characterofgod.org/eye-for-an-eye/). (<https://characterofgod.org/eye-for-an-eye/>)

## Satan’s Idea of Justice

In discussing the war between God and Satan (or good and evil), one writer gave this scenario:

“In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be

broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God’s favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p761)



That attitude (attributed above to Satan) is consistent with what has developed over the centuries in terms of people’s understanding of God’s justice – that sin must be punished or God is not just. That is the basis of man’s justice and the concept adopted by most of Christianity. The question is whether or not it is the same as God’s.

## Summary

God's justice in the **Traditional Legal Model** and the thinking of most Christians is all about payment for sin. Someone has to pay the penalty. You do the crime, you do the time. Such a view diminishes God's mercy and forgiveness; it makes Him subject to justice itself which must be satisfied.

According to the **Biblical Healing Model** God's justice is doing the right thing according to the law of love which is to restore to a right state, to heal and to save. Justice, if it is truly done in love, is first seeking the good of others, it is not about keeping track of wrongs in order to even the score. Justice is restorative but, if it is not able to restore, it simply releases the other to the inevitable results of sin which is death.

# Justification

**Note:** this page includes discussion of the word “justified.”

**Traditional Legal Model** – justification is the declaration that a person is right with God in a legal sense – He is then justified, his sins being forgiven and the penalty paid. Essentially, it is a ticket to heaven.

**Biblical Healing Model** – to cure man’s condition in the sense of setting man’s heart right (or justifying it) with God. Such a person is then **justified**.

## Definitions from Spiritual Sources

“A legal declaration involving God’s free grace in which He pardons the sinner, making him innocent, and reckons the believing sinner righteous. Justification gives the believing sinner perfect permanent standing before the Father.” (From <https://bible.org/seriespage/appendix-glossary-terms>, accessed Dec. 24, 2017)

“God is the one who makes us just, even though we are unjust. He is just and the justifier. The glory is that God pronounces us, His children, to be just. This is amazing, especially because we are still sinners. God actually declares us righteous in His sight. God has made us right before His law even though we are sinners; our Father judges us as just even though we are unjust. However, our Father who art in heaven is just and the justifier; He is the only one who can make a person righteous. He justifies men and women who put their faith, belief, and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. (From: <https://www.spiritualight.ca/justification-1.html>, accessed Dec. 24, 2017)

“A forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law, i.e., as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardon (q.v.) of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect of the justified. It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law (Rom. 5:1-10).” (<http://thekingsbible.com/BibleDictionary.aspx?dict=Full&dw=justification>, accessed Dec. 26, 2017)

Even **Webster’s 1828 dictionary** gives this definition (the one related to theology)

“4. In theology, remission of sin and absolution from guilt and punishment; or an act of free grace by which God pardons the sinner and accepts him as righteous, on account of

the atonement of Christ.”

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/justification>; accessed Dec. 24, 2017)

Webster’s definition is pretty much in line with most modern definitions (examples above) as this legal understanding became common long before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Notice, in the modern definitions above, phrases like:

- “making him innocent”
- “reckons the believing sinner righteous.”
- “makes us just, even though we are unjust”
- “God pronounces us ... to be just ... amazing ... because we are still sinners”
- “God has made us right before His law even though we are sinners”
- “our Father judges us as just even though we are unjust”
- “treats them as righteous”
- “declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied”
- “the law ... is declared to be fulfilled”

These definitions are suggesting God is saying a person is just, righteous, innocent even when he is not. It has been argued that such statements even charge God with lying. Man is guilty, unjust, unrighteous, still a sinner and yet God says He is justified! There is something suspicious with this.

It is often pictured as the sinner before God as the judge with Jesus standing between them so that as God looks toward the sinner He can only see Jesus. The evidence that the defendant is guilty is not admissible to the court and he is thus declared to be innocent.

## Justification Understood as Being Set Right

Justification can also be understood and defined as to set things right. We use the term that way today. Think of print on a page and how it can be “justified” or lined up to the margins of the page. This paragraph **is not justified**.

Justification can also be understood and defined as to set things right. We use the term that way today. Think of print on a page and how it can be “justified” or lined up to the margins of the page. This paragraph **is justified**.

To achieve a state of justification (noun) one must be justified (verb) or made right or aligned to a certain standard or come into right relation with something/someone else. Something has to change in whoever/whatever is being justified. But to declare justification in its absence is a sham. It is only a change in the understanding or attitude or opinion of the one declaring the justification with no change in the one who is “justified.”



There are a few problems with the traditional understanding of justification:

- Justification is viewed strictly in legal terms.
- Guilt is transferred from the guilty to the innocent (contrary to Ezekiel 18).
- The actual heart condition of the defendant is not taken into account.
- The sin problem is not resolved in the person.
- It makes God (the judge) to be unaware of or ignoring the facts of the case.

True justification is not achieved by transferring the blame to someone else even if they are willing to take that blame but by having a new heart and mind, by being healed of what was wrong, being set right. This glossary takes the position that Biblical justification is to be set right in relation to God as opposed to it being a strictly legal transaction. This is reflected in some translations such as:

“Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1, Good News Translation)

True justification is a change in us (our attitude towards God) not a change in His attitude towards us (however, He and all heaven rejoice over us when we choose to trust Him), not a change in legal standing (except that we are then safe to live in heaven).

The further question in regard to Biblical justification is what is the justification in relation to? Is it in relation to the law or is it in relation to God? Is it legal or is it relational? Many of these questions can be answered by a careful examination of [the case of Abraham](https://characterofgod.org/justification-of-abraham/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/justification-of-abraham/>)

Justified is also used in the sense of being proven to be right by evidence as in this verse:

“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”  
(Rom 3:4)

Paul is not speaking of God being justified or set right in that there was anything wrong with Him. He is saying that God’s sayings will be justified in that what He said will be proven to be right.

# Justified

- see entry for "[justification](#)"

## Kill

**Note** that this study includes and compares definitions for both “kill” and “murder.” A very major question in understanding the character of God is whether or not God personally kills anyone.

**Traditional Legal Model** – To kill as in “Thou shalt not kill” (The sixth commandment, Exo 20:13) is to commit what we would call murder, the malicious and unjustified taking of another life. It does not include killing in self-defense, times of war or to satisfy justice.

**Biblical Healing Model** – To kill is to take the life of another human under any circumstances or for any reason.

### Modern Dictionary Definition

#### Kill (verb)

1. to deprive of life in any manner; cause the death of; slay.

#### Murder (verb)

4. Law. to kill by an act constituting murder.

#### Murder (noun)

Law. the killing of another human being under conditions specifically covered in law. In the U.S., special statutory definitions include murder committed with malice aforethought, characterized by deliberation or premeditation or occurring during the commission of another serious crime, as robbery or arson (first-degree murder), and murder by intent but without deliberation or premeditation (second-degree murder). (www.dictionary.com, accessed May 23, 2018)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

#### Kill (verb)

To deprive of life, animal or vegetable, in any manner or by any means. ... (http://webstersdictionary1828.com/kill, accessed Jul. 9, 2018)

## Murder (noun)

The act of unlawfully killing a human being with premeditated malice, by a person of sound mind. To constitute *murder* in law, the person killing another must be of sound mind or in possession of his reason, and the act must be done with malice prepense, aforethought or premeditated; but malice may be implied, as well as express.  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/murder>, accessed Jul. 9, 2018)

## What is Prohibited by the Sixth Commandment?

“Thou shalt not kill.” (Exo 20:13)

The word “kill” is from the Hebrew word “ratsach” (Strong’s H7523) which is translated as both kill (5 times) and murder (3 times). Many other versions translate it as “murder” and it is often argued that the commandment prohibits murder but not killing in many other situations such as self-defense, military duty or execution for a capital offence. Therefore, the suggestion is that only malicious, premeditated taking of life is prohibited. However, the Bible uses the term “ratsach” to refer to killing other than what we would call pre-meditated murder:

“That the slayer (ratsach) might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:” (Deut 4:42) (See also Num 35:22-25)

In that verse, the act was not what we would call murder (“unawares”) yet it uses “ratsach.”

Many, believing the sixth commandment only prohibits murder and that, in many situations, it is not a crime to kill another, say that the Hebrew word for that is “muwth” (Strong’s H4191). However, there are examples of “muwth” being used in cases of premeditated, unjustified killing:

“The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay (muwth, H4191) him.” Psalm 37:32

“But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: ...” (1 Sam 19:2)

There are a number of other cases in which the word “muwth” is used in cases of murder or assassination. So, clearly, “muwth” can mean murder and “ratsach” can mean even accidental killings. This proves false the claim that “muwth” is used only for righteous execution and “ratsach” for murder.

Now consider this verse:

“Whoso killeth any person, the murderer (ratsach) shall be put to death (ratsach) by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.” (Num 35:30)

God is saying that anyone who kills (no reason or motive specified) any person (most people would consider that to be an act of murder because the word “ratsach” is used) should be (by the command of God) “put to death” (or – to be consistent, since this uses the same term ratsach, murdered). Does that make sense?

A problem is that, while the commandment says “thou shalt not kill,” God often commanded the Israelites to kill their enemies. There are various reasons in different cases, an important one being that of God issuing permissive commands – allowing man to do what he wants to even though it is not God’s first choice.

A larger problem in the minds of many is cases where it seems (and even literally reads) that God Himself personally and directly killed humans. Many of these are cases in which [God is said to do that which He merely allows or permits](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/). (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/)

#### **Related topics:**

[The Ten Commandments are Ten Promises](https://characterofgod.org/ten-commands-ten-promises/)

(https://characterofgod.org/ten-commands-ten-promises/)

Killing in the Old Testament – see specific incidents under [Biblical Events](https://characterofgod.org/biblical-events/)

(https://characterofgod.org/biblical-events/)

# Kingdom of God

Wouldn't the kingdom of God be important to understand if you want to be a part of it? Here you can learn the characteristics of God's kingdom and what it means to be a part of it.

**Traditional Legal Model** – the reign of God on Earth. God's rule over His people. Those who do not submit to God's rule are not part of His kingdom.

**Biblical Healing Model** – The principles of God, based on His character, being lived out in the lives of those who, by doing that, have His kingdom in their hearts.

## Common Understanding of the Kingdom of God

Here are examples of the common understanding of the meaning of the kingdom of God:

"The answer is, the kingdom of God is God's reign — his sovereign action in the world to redeem and deliver a people and then at a future time finish it and renew his people and the universe completely." (<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god>)

**"Here are three things that the Kingdom of God means:**

1. The rule of Jesus Christ on earth
2. The blessing and advantages that flow from living under Christ's rule
3. The subjects of this kingdom, or the Church"

(<https://www.christianity.com/god/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god-understanding-it-s-meaning.html>)

"There is another sense in which the kingdom of God is used in Scripture: the literal rule of Christ on the earth during the millennium." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-of-God.html>)

There are a number of aspects to the kingdom of God that sites such as those above do get into to various degrees but the emphasis is generally about God's reign of a physical kingdom. This page shows that, Biblically, the millennium does not involve [God's physical reign on Earth](https://www.jesus-resurrection.info/millennium.html). (<https://www.jesus-resurrection.info/millennium.html>)

## The Kingdom of God is not Physical

Let's see what scripture says about the kingdom of God:

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from **the kingdom of God**. And no man after that durst ask him any question." (Mark 12:34)

Why did Jesus say that the scribe He was talking to was not far from the kingdom of God? It was not because he was soon to die and go to heaven (Of course, scripture teaches that the dead know nothing.) It was not because a physical kingdom of God was about to be established on earth. It was not that He was then physically near Jesus.

The scribe of Mark 12 was not close to the kingdom in either time or space so it must have been in the sense of his understanding. This is evidenced by the fact that Jesus was commenting on what the scribe had said:

"And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Mark 12:32-33)

In fact, Jesus made it clear that His was not an earthly kingdom:

"Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36)

Recall that, on one occasion, Peter did use the sword in an attempt to defend his master:

"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear." (Matt 26:51)

However, Jesus did not sanction that action:

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt 26:52)

## The Kingdom of God is More Understood Than Seen

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation**: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.**” (Luke 17:20-21)

Some might argue that it will be very visible quoting verse 24:

“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.” (Luke 17:24)

Also, this verse speaks of a very visible coming:

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and **every eye shall see him**, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Rev 1:7)

However, putting those verses together just proves the point that the kingdom is not primarily about anything physical. Revelation 1:7 is talking about Jesus’ coming not the coming of the Kingdom of heaven. He will be coming for those who have the kingdom of heaven in their hearts already.

It is not a kingdom that can be seen outwardly. Could it be something like a state of mind existing in a subject of the kingdom? (2 Cor 5:7)

## The Kingdom Expected

There was a popular expectation in Jesus’ day that an earthly kingdom was about to be established:

“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because **they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.**” (Luke 19:11)

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**” (Acts 1:6)

That the term “the kingdom of God” means the same as “the kingdom of Heaven” is shown by various gospel writers:

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God** is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for **the kingdom of heaven** is at hand.” (Matt 4:17)

[Tim Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>) has a good [comparison of the principles](https://comeandreason.com/covid-crisis-12-lies/) (<https://comeandreason.com/covid-crisis-12-lies/>) of God’s kingdom vs those of Satan’s kingdom:

<b>God’s Kingdom How God reigns</b>	<b>Satan’s Kingdom How Satan reigns</b>
Love	Fear and selfishness
Truth	Lies
Evidence	Proclamation / claims
Design law	Imposed laws
Freedom / liberty	Coercion / force
Character / motive	Behavior / deed

We can understand if a ruler or government is operating according to the principles of God’s kingdom or Satan’s kingdom by the methods they use to govern.

Godly methods will include truth, love, freedom and openness to investigation and questioning. Ungodly methods will employ censorship, accusations, deception, coercion, demands, control, mandates, intimidation and inciting fear in order to control.

## Receiving the Kingdom Means a Change

Notice what Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

That suggests a change in nature, a starting over.

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer **little children** to come unto me, and forbid them not: for **of such** is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:16)

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not **receive** the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” (Mark 10:15)

How does a child receive any gift? – they just accept it in trust.



Does God want us to have the kingdom?

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your **Father’s good pleasure to give** you the kingdom.”  
(Luke 12:32)

There are verses suggesting it might be hard to get in:

“And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Matt 19:24)

It is not God making it hard to get into the kingdom. Remember, the kingdom is more of a mindset or an experience than it is a physical kingdom. What might make it hard? Probably our way of thinking, especially about Him.

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

The pairing of “the kingdom of God” AND “His righteousness” indicates that they are inseparably linked.

“For the kingdom of God is **not meat and drink**; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rom 14:17)

“Not meat and drink” means not to do with physical things.

“But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that **the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.**” (Luke 10:10-11)

Jesus was saying not that a physical kingdom had somehow come near but that an opportunity to learn the truth of God’s kingdom had been made available – and they had spurned it.

Receiving the kingdom, becoming a subject of it means more than being a part of the religion of the day as Nicodemus was. It means recognizing, accepting and living by the principals of God’s eternal kingdom which are based on His unchanging and ever-merciful, loving character.

## John the Baptist

Something was said about John the Baptist and the Kingdom of heaven that is very interesting:

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding **he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**” (Matt 11:11)

It doesn't seem to speak highly of John the Baptist. But please visit [here](https://characterofgod.org/kingdom-god/#john-baptist) (<https://characterofgod.org/kingdom-god/#john-baptist>) to learn why Jesus said that and what it indicates about the kingdom that John did not understand. There is additional information on that page about the kingdom of God.

John had faith in Jesus as the Messiah – he was the one to publicly introduce the Messiah to Israel. However, he did not appreciate the principles of God's way of dealing with people.

## Thy Kingdom Come

“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. **Thy kingdom come.** Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” (Luke 11:2)

Why would God encourage such a prayer if He had no intention of His kingdom being operational on Earth? That verse makes a connection between the kingdom coming and God's will being done on earth meaning obedience by His subjects.

Other verses suggest that people on Earth are or will be a part of this kingdom:

“These great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings, *which* shall arise out of the earth. But **the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom**, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” (Dan 7:17-18)

The saints “take the kingdom” or, as it is more commonly translated, “receive the kingdom.” They are not taking the kingdom of God from kings of the earth who never had it. This verse links receiving the kingdom with a level of knowledge:

“Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment** [discernment] was given [granted] to the saints of the most High; and the time came that **the saints possessed the kingdom.**” (Dan 7:22)

“And this gospel of the kingdom **shall be preached in all the world** for a witness unto all nations; and **then shall the end come.**” (Matt 24:14)

Christians look for that to happen shortly before the end.

**“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”** (Dan 2:44)

If God sets up a kingdom it is logical that He is setting up His kingdom. The setting up of that kingdom is initiated by an event described earlier in Daniel’s vision:

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and **the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.**” (Dan 2:34-35)



## The Kingdom of God on Earth

Scripture says elsewhere what will fill the whole earth:

**“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”** (Isa 11:9)

**“For the earth shall be filled** with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab 2:14)

Does that mean the kingdom of God will be universally accepted or even acknowledged? Most likely it will not even be understood by all, but it will be available.

How could such a kingdom be set up anywhere on earth and stand forever? Wouldn’t it be interrupted by the Second Coming, the destruction of the earth etc?

If the kingdom that God sets up “in the days of these kings” is not a physical kingdom but a way of thinking, a set of attitudes in the minds of its subjects, it could continue right through the Second Coming and on into eternity.

So, if the kingdom of heaven is not referring to the physical location of heaven and some were part of the kingdom of heaven in John's day, could the kingdom of heaven exist even now? Or perhaps the kingdom of heaven (a correct knowledge of God) has been largely lost over the centuries (think especially of the Dark Ages) and is only now being reestablished – "in the days of these kings" (Dan 2:44).

Is it possible that the 144,000 will more fully understand (even than John the Baptist did) the kingdom of heaven and will thus be able to live and share it with conviction and power?

Pray that you might see the light of the truth of God's wonderful character so that this verse might be fulfilled for you:

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col 1:13)

# Law

**Traditional Legal Model** – God’s laws are the rules He made to govern our behavior which, if transgressed, incur the imposed legal penalty of death (Rom 6:23).

**Biblical Healing Model** – “law” is used in two major ways:

1. God’s laws are the design template for life and are based on love, the defining characteristic of God, (“God is love” – 1 John 4:8) deviations from which, if not corrected, naturally end in death.
2. Specific laws were given as diagnostic tools (“By the law is the knowledge of sin” – Rom 3:20) to show man his condition – whether or not he is in harmony with God’s law/principle of love.

## Is it “Law” or “The Law”?

The difference within the Biblical Healing Model between laws as God’s design for life and laws as diagnostic tools is often (but not always) reflected in the use or non-use of the definite article “the” with “law.”

Especially in Paul’s letter to the Romans, where there is much discussion about law, the absence or presence of the definite article “the” with “law” is significant. In Romans, “law” is used about 35 times with the article and about 40 times without.

One needs to check an interlinear version or consult a good commentary to determine whether the definite article is present or not in the original Greek because various Bible versions will add or omit it incorrectly.

When absent, the emphasis is generally on “law” as a principle (as in the first definition above under Biblical Healing Model). To say someone “disregards law” or “is a lawbreaker” says more about the attitude of the person than it does of a particular law broken by that person. The following two verses can easily be seen as speaking of law as a principle. In both cases, the definite article “the,” while appearing in the King James Version, is not present in the original. (I have crossed it out in the verses.)

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled ~~the~~ law.” (Rom 13:8)

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of ~~the~~ law.” (Rom 13:10)

When the article is present, it is speaking more often of law as a code of conduct or of particular laws (as in the second definition above under Biblical Healing Model).

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,” (Rom 4:16)

In the verse above, “the law” (definite article in original) can readily be understood to be a reference to the written law as it is used to distinguish a people to whom it as given (“that ... which is of the law”) as opposed to others who shared the faith of Abraham but were not his descendants (“to all the seed” – all who believe).

The challenge is to determine whether it is present or absent in the original Greek as various translations often are not consistent in including or excluding the article as used in the original. Even knowing whether the article is present or not, sometimes the context must be carefully considered to make the distinction.

### **Modern Dictionary Definition**

“**Law** (noun) The principles and regulations established in a community by some authority and applicable to its people, whether in the form of legislation or of custom and policies recognized and enforced by judicial decision.” (www.dictionary.com, accessed Dec. 30, 2017)

### **Webster’s 1828 Dictionary**

“1. A rule, particularly an established or permanent rule, prescribed by the supreme power of a state to its subjects, for regulating their actions, particularly their social actions. Laws are imperative or mandatory, commanding what shall be done; prohibitory, restraining from what is to be forborn; or permissive, declaring what may be done without incurring a penalty. The laws which enjoin the duties of piety and morality, are prescribed by God and found in the Scriptures.”

“8. Moral law a law which prescribes to men their religious and social duties, in other words, their duties to God and to each other. The moral law is summarily contained in the decalogue or ten commandments, written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, and delivered to Moses on mount Sinai.”

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/law>, accessed Dec. 30, 2017)

Of course, there are other meanings for law including natural law etc. Specific Divine laws also include:

- Directions regarding the sanctuary and its services
- Laws relating to personal relationships, marriage, slavery etc
- Laws about commerce, health, sanitation and agriculture

## God's Laws Are Not Legal

God's law (principle) of other-centered love is not **arbitrary**. Death is the inherent result/natural **consequence** of self-centeredness which is a state of separation from God. Therefore, death is not a legal penalty, for the law simply declares reality. If uncorrected, a state of sin – living outside the law – results in final separation from God (Who is the source of life) and results in death. "The wages of sin is death ..." (Rom 6:23). [More verses saying this](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/) (https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/).

God's laws regarding behavior can be understood as diagnostic tools. A hurtful act such as stealing shows a person to be self-centered rather than other-centered. Attempting to keep all the laws regarding behavior (while good) can never save (**legalism** does not work) because behavior is not the problem. The heart must be changed to be in harmony with the principle of other-centered love. For more on how this change takes place see the series of studies [The Cleansing of the Sanctuary](https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/) (https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/).

### The Lenses/Paradigms Through Which Law is Understood

It also helps to understand God's law by diagramming its function:

Traditional Legal Model	Biblical Healing Model
<p>Because God is sovereign and regards Himself as the law giver He gave laws for us to obey.</p> <p>Those laws are arbitrary; they operate like man's civil laws, with imposed punishments.</p> <p>The laws are imposed upon us as requirements to be obeyed:</p> <div> </div> <p>God's role in this model is "dictator" - He dictates the rules</p>	<p>Because God is love and regards us with other-centered love He gave laws for our protection.</p> <p>Those laws are natural; they relate to particular risks that man needs protection from.</p> <p>The laws are put around us as a hedge of protection:</p> <div> </div> <p>God's role in this model is "protector" - He protects and provides</p>

This difference in views of the role of law is further explained [here](https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>)

## Can Divine Laws be Changed?

The law of God as a principle reflects His very nature and is therefore, like Him, unchangeable. God's laws regarding details of behavior (the diagnostic tools) can and do change as God deems necessary for our situation. They change because He does not. He always operates in accord with His key attribute of other-centered love. One example of law being changed is:

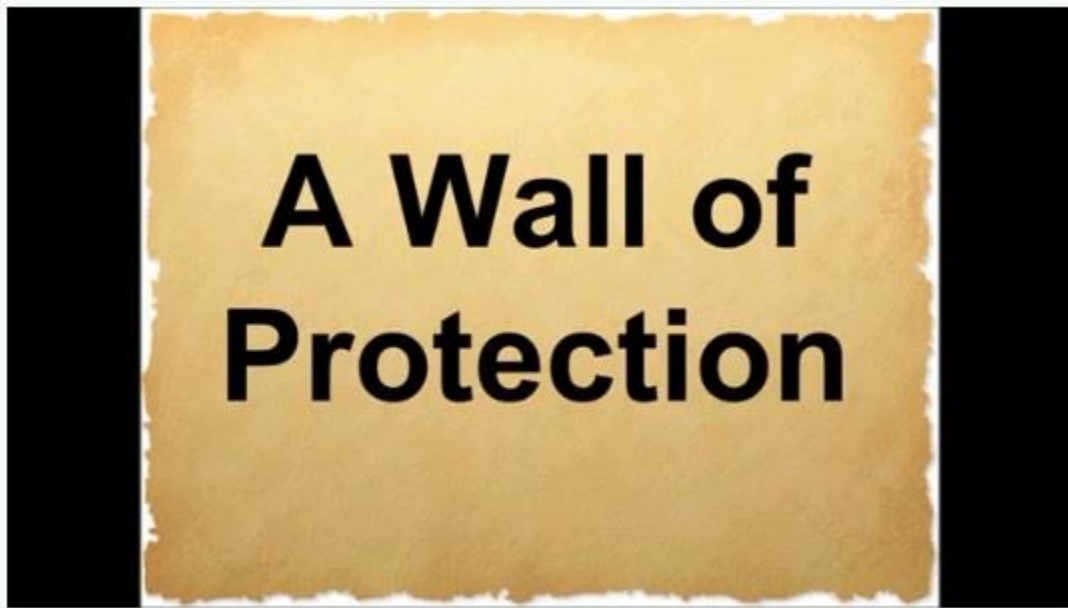
"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."  
(Heb 7:12)

There are many examples of what have been termed divine [accommodation](https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/)  
(<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>).



A more thorough explanation of the role of divine law is given in this video.

**A Wall of Protection** (56 min) – the real role of God's law.



Click [here](https://youtu.be/slqWam7Q9Uw) to watch on YouTube  
(<https://youtu.be/slqWam7Q9Uw>)

## Law, design (natural)\*

(supplemental term)

Design laws are the laws the Creator established for the universe to run on. They include all laws of physics (gravity, light, atomic structure), laws of life (respiration, photosynthesis, enzymatic action) and also God's moral laws. All deviations from design laws cause damage in some way. God, the Designer, seeks to have us understand His design laws for our own good and keep them for our benefit and protection.

The opposite of design or natural law is **imposed law**.

## Law, imposed (arbitrary)\*

(supplemental term)

Within our human-law system, there are imposed penalties for breaking laws that must be **arbitrarily** imposed as there is nothing inherently wrong with breaking such laws. Driving 90 km/hr in an 80 km/hr zone doesn't naturally cause any damage or hurt to anyone.

Believers in the **Biblical Healing Model** or **penal substitution** system (most of Christianity) deny that [sin itself causes death](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/) and instead teach that sin is a legal problem with God's laws which they understand to be imposed (rather than design) laws. Sin, in such a system, must be arbitrarily punished. This false belief makes God into One who is imposing His own will to do what He wants rather than a God of love Who is first of all doing what is best for His created beings.

The opposite of imposed law is **design or natural law**.

# Legalism\*

(supplemental term)

**Legalism** (noun):

1. strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, especially to the letter rather than the spirit.
2. Theology.
  1. the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works.
  2. the judging of conduct in terms of adherence to precise laws.

(www.dictionary.com)

The source above adds that the word was first used in about 1830-40 explaining why it does not appear in Webster's 1828 dictionary.

Legalism, the belief that one can be saved by obeying laws not meant to save us but only to regulate behavior and show the condition of the heart, was well-demonstrated by the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

Legalism puts God's acceptance of us based on our performance ahead of His acceptance of us based on relationship; His love for us. In fact, the Bible indicates that even our best performance doesn't count for much:

"But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isa 64:6)

In what is the most-often used diagram on this website, legalism equates to focusing most on which of the three levels of sin? See [Mopping up the Mess](https://characterofgod.org/mopping-up-the-mess/) (https://characterofgod.org/mopping-up-the-mess/)

Of course, the great danger in legalism is that one believing it to be the way of salvation will be less likely to seek a trusting relationship with Jesus who said:

"... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)



# Lightning

- see entry for "[Arrows](#)"

## Longsuffering (of God)

**Traditional Legal Model:** God restraining Himself to give man a little more time before He finally takes corrective or punitive action.

**Biblical Healing Model:** God actually suffering emotionally while hoping man will turn to Him.

### Modern Dictionary

**Longsuffering**, adjective  
enduring injury, trouble, or provocation long and patiently.  
(www.dictionary.com)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Longsuffering**, adjective  
Bearing injuries or provocation for a long time; patient; not easily provoked.

Applied to God, "not **easily** provoked" implies that He is patient for a long time, enduring the provocation until something snaps and He lashes out in reaction, takes retributive action etc.

Here is a verse that seems to support that idea:

"But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, **until the wrath of the LORD arose** against his people, till there was no remedy." (2 Chron 36:16)

Before reaching the point of "until" in that verse, what were they (God's people, v15) doing? They "mocked the messengers," "despised his words" and "misused his prophets. That certainly sounds like provocation. And then what happened? "The wrath of the LORD arose."

Notice that it doesn't say "God punished them." Rather, it says "there was no remedy." The next verse helps to explain what happened:

"Therefore **he brought upon them** the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: **he gave them all into his hand.**" (2 Chron 36:17)

While this passage does not use the word "longsuffering," it could be understood in the way we commonly think of longsuffering - God put up with their provocations until some point and then took action against them.

However, "He brought" can be understood as an accommodation to their choices as indicated later in the verse: "**he gave them all into his hand.**" God did not protect His people because of their actions as listed in verse 16.

This could actually be seen as a good example of what I call the **SWAT** formula:

**S in** = Mocked the messengers  
**W rath** of the Lord  
**A llowed consequences** = gave into his hand (Chaldeans)  
**T rouble** = young men slain etc.

"But **they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets**, until **the wrath of the LORD arose** against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore **he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees**, who **slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.**" (2 Chron 36:16-17)

That process is explained in detail at: <https://characterofgod.org/wrath-anger-definition/> and over 70 examples are given here: <https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/>

It is not God being patient to a point and then losing His temper. Rather, He patiently keeps doing all He can to get through to His people (sorrowing for their state the whole time) until there is nothing left to do. Notice the parallel structure:

- until **the wrath of the LORD arose**
- till there was no remedy

It was when there was no remedy left, that God had no choice but to make an accommodation of some sort such as to let His people go the way they had chosen and reap the consequences. It was either that or force them to comply which God will not do. There are other examples in scripture:

- When the people would not take no for an answer in their request for a king, God directed the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first king. (1 Sam 9:17)
- When Moses would not agree to be God's spokesman before Pharaoh, God told Moses that his brother Aaron would be his spokesman. (Exo 4:14-16)
- When the Israelites refused to come near Mt. Sinai to hear God's words, God used Moses to relay His words to the people. (Exo 20:19, 22)

Read more about those and other [examples of God's accommodations](https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) (https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) for His people.

## Word Meanings

"Longsuffering" in 12 of 13 New Testament uses, is translated from:

3115 μακροθυμία makrothumia mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah

from the same as **3116**; n f;

AV-longsuffering 12, patience 2; 14

- 1) **patience**, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance
- 2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

There is another word translated "patience": G5281 "hupomone" which is not translated as "longsuffering."

The On-line Bible calls the two words synonyms and compares them:

"5281 is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering,

3115 is the **self restraint** which does not **hastily** retaliate a wrong.

The one [G5281] is opposed to cowardice or despondency, the other {G3115} to wrath and revenge."

So they are not exactly synonyms. G5281 might be not giving up in spite of waiting a long time for a treatment to heal an injury. G3115 might be not blowing up at the kids that persist in being much too noisy.

The word "longsuffering" in both the Old and New Testaments is used of God or of qualities to be seen in His people. We are especially looking at G3115, the word translated as "longsuffering" in the New Testament.

From the On-line Bible definition, we have this:

**"self restraint** which does not **hastily** retaliate a wrong."

Can you see that there are problems with that in relation to God?

"Does not **hastily** retaliate" implies that eventually God does retaliate. God is not like a young child who hits another in retaliation for a like injury.

**Self-restraint?** - does God have to restrain Himself? That makes no sense. God is always in complete control; He does not change; He is consistent in behavior. Self-restraint implies an inner conflict.

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."  
(2 Tim 2:13)

## Longsuffering and Patience

Evidence that longsuffering and patience do not mean the same thing is the fact that they are used together:

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all **patience** (G5281) and **longsuffering** (G3115) with joyfulness;"  
(Col 1:11)

"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, **longsuffering** (G3115), charity, **patience** (G5281)," (2 Tim 3:10)

## A Quality of God

Longsuffering is a quality of God's character:

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, **longsuffering** (H750), and abundant in goodness and truth," (Exo 34:6)

The Lord said that in response to Moses' request:

"And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy **glory**. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the **name** of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (Exo 33:18-19)

The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses G3115 for "longsuffering" in Exodus 34:6.

## The Longsuffering of God

"Longsuffering" means patience as in not retaliating against an ongoing wrong (waiting for something to happen such as people to repent), yes, but what is the longsufferer, the one doing the longsuffering - God, in this case - doing or experiencing while being so patient, while longsuffering?

Of course, He is suffering. Did God suffer in Old Testament times?

"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the **longsuffering** of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (1 Peter 3:20)

"And it **repented** the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved** him at his heart." (Gen 6:6)

"Grieved him at his heart" would be the state He was in during that time. That sounds rather like suffering. Many would see that as a good example of:

"the **self restraint** which does not **hastily** retaliate a wrong."

God waited for 120 years and would have been suffering (grieved) for some time before that. Then what did He finally do?

"Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was **overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?**" (Job 22:15-17)

He could do nothing for them without imposing upon them when they did not want His presence.

"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much **longsuffering** the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:" (Rom 9:22)

"What if God, choosing to reveal what will happen, **patiently continued to offer treatment** to those who refuse his healing Remedy, and yet **they refused to take his free cure anyway?** What if, in this way, God revealed that such people **prepare themselves** for death and destruction?" (Rom 9:22, The Remedy New Testament)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing** that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

If things are happening that are contrary to what God wills, wouldn't that cause Him some pain? The antediluvians did not want His help and neither did the Jews in Jesus' day:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt 23:37)



## Longsuffering Misunderstood

Here are some discussions of "longsuffering" from other sources:

"However, we need to understand that **long-suffering does not mean eternal tolerance**. As we have seen in 2 Peter 3:9, God does not want men to perish, so **He is delaying the destruction** of the world, **hoping** that we will turn to Him before it is too late for repentance. But, understand that this is not a promise of a permanent delay;" ([https://www.murrayledger.com/church\\_page/fruit-of-the-spirit---long-suffering/article\\_6b4cc2ce-bf4a-11e7-a3d4-9f0de17ec52e.html](https://www.murrayledger.com/church_page/fruit-of-the-spirit---long-suffering/article_6b4cc2ce-bf4a-11e7-a3d4-9f0de17ec52e.html))

"God is the source of longsuffering because it is part of His character. ... He is patient with sinners. At the same time, **God's longsuffering can come to an end, as seen in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah** ... **As God is longsuffering** with us, we can and must be longsuffering with others." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-longsuffering.html>)

Any problems with those? "God's longsuffering **can come to an end.**" "**As God is ... we can and must be** longsuffering" - But if His longsuffering can come to an end, therefore, logically, it would be okay for us to lose patience. This is an example of the danger of misunderstanding God's character - it will affect our own.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**, gentleness, goodness, faith," (Gal 5:22)

# Love

**Love** is defined in a practical way by the life and words of Jesus Who came to show the true meaning of “God is love” (1 John 3:4, 8). From the perspective of the two models of the gospel, the “definitions” below point out the major difference in how God’s love functions toward sinners.

**Traditional Legal Model** – Because of God’s love, He sent His Son to pay the legal penalty of death so that He could forgive and save us.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Because God loves us, He forgives us unconditionally, holds nothing against us and sent His Son to show what that love is like.

“In this was **manifested the love of God** toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9)

Notice that, in the Healing Model, the forgiveness came even before Jesus was sent (and came willingly). Because of the hardness of hearts, that revelation of His Father’s love was almost entirely rejected with the result that wicked men betrayed and murdered Him (Acts 7:52).

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Love (noun)

1. a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.
2. a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.
3. sexual passion or desire.

(These are the first of 28 listings for love at [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Mar. 8, 2018)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### Love (noun)

An affection of the mind excited by beauty and worth of any kind, or by the qualities of an object which communicate pleasure, sensual or intellectual.

The love of God is the first duty of man, and this springs from just views of his attributes or excellencies of character, which afford the highest delight to the sanctified heart. Esteem and reverence constitute ingredients in this affection, and a fear of offending him is its inseparable effect.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/love>)

## The Love of God

God's love is unselfish and unconditional; self-sacrificing is the term. Its quality comes from the character and principles of the One doing the loving not from the value, merit or behavior of the object of the love:

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: **the LORD thy God hath chosen thee** to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did **not** set his love upon you, nor choose you, **because ye were more in number than any people**; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because **the LORD loved you ...**” (Deut 7:6-8)

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:7-8)

## Force not Compatible With Love

It is vitally important to understand that love cannot be won by force or threats of force – that never works. God can “command” us to love Him in the sense of telling us it is the best thing to do but as soon as there is a threat of force, trust is broken. It is often reasoned that God could have eliminated Lucifer when sin first sprang up in his heart but then all of God's other created sentient beings would have only served Him (if they would at all) out of fear. Love must grant free will and continue to honor it.

## The Best Picture of Love

This is seen in the life of Jesus and how He treated others in so many situations. More than once, He said His life was to show what the Father is like. Sometimes called the love chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 13 describes the characteristics of agape love:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1 Cor 13:1-7)

The KJV translators used “charity” to translate “agape,” especially in this chapter, to emphasize that agape is a selfless, giving love.

## “Only One Word for Love in English?”

Something often said is that “There is only one word for love in English” which is, of course, almost silliness. There is only one word for any word in any language – that word. The saying, in spiritual circles, is used to make the point that there are multiple original Greek words translated as love.

**Agape** – self-sacrificing; based on decision and principle

**Eros\*** – erotic, sensual

**Phileo** – for close family, friends; emotion-based

**Storgah\*** – for general acquaintances, relatives, pets

(\*Not used in the Bible.)

In English, there are a great number of words (many more than the four we know of in Greek) that are close in meaning to love; on-line dictionaries list dozens of synonyms.

**Phileo** represents a sentimental love based on feelings and emotions.

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” (Matt 6:5)

**Agape** is a love based on principle, on doing the right thing because it is right. It is the love that the Bible says we should have even towards our enemies.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matt 5:44)

It helps me to understand that I am to have a principle-based love for everyone, meaning I always treat them with respect, honor their freedom, wish the best for them and would benefit them where I could without necessarily having to like what they do or stand for. (Let’s face it, some people do not even try to be likeable.) Agape separates feelings from actions; it is based on principle.

## God’s Love in Relation to His Law

Some laws, at least physical laws (for example gravity), are needed keep the universe running. If God is agape love in the ultimate sense, then it would make sense that His laws are all made primarily for our good and happiness before His.

Let's consider a few that might, at first glance, seem to be otherwise.

**Love God first.** Of all the rules, laws, whatever you might call them, when Jesus was asked "which is the great commandment in the law?" He answered:

"... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." (Matt 22:37-38)

Is God saying "Love Me first"? Does that sound selfish? Is it love me or else? If all of God's laws are for our benefit then we will definitely be blessed if we keep them. However, it is love for the lawgiver (and knowledge that His ways are best, that He truly does love us and wants our happiness) that will give us the incentive to even want to keep them. If we don't love God, we will not have the appreciation and respect for Him that will make us want to keep His laws. The result of that would be our unhappiness and disappointment for God. Not because He has not been obeyed but because we are not as happy as we could be. He is concerned for us not for Himself.

**Do not worship idols.** Not only does God tell us to love Him but He does not seem to like competition:

**"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,** or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a **jealous God** ..." (Exo 20:4-5)

The problem is that we tend to become like the God(s) we worship; we admire and try to emulate whatever we see to be of value.

"They that make them (idols) are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." (Psa 115:8)

That can get pretty silly too:

"He burneth part (of a piece of wood) thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god." (Isa 44:16-17)

God is simply trying to protect us from such folly when He says to not worship idols. He wants us to trust in Him because only He can provide for our needs and make us truly happy.

## High and Lifted Up

Here is one verse which sounds like God occupying a highly-exalted and even physically-high position.

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, **high and lifted up**, and his train filled the temple.” (Isa 6:1)

Is He trying to exalt Himself or impress us with His appearance? He does give people glimpses of His glory in vision especially when they need to be reminded that He is managing events in times of crisis. But that phrase “high and lifted up” is interesting. The only other use of it in scripture is:

“And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,” (Isa 2:13)

In both cases, the phrase is the same in the original and is the passive form. The cedars are certainly not responsible for lifting themselves up. In the case of Isaiah’s vision, it seems likely that the throne of God is lifted up by angels (Eze 10:1 etc.). It seems that God is not exalting Himself so much as the angels who so admire His wonderful character are exalting Him.

## Some Additional Thoughts

**The opposite** of agape love is not hate, but selfishness.

**Carried to their extremes**, agape love and selfishness look like this:

**Agape love** – I am willing to die that you might live.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”  
(John 15:13)

**Selfishness** – I am willing to kill you that I might live.

**We deserve love** because of who we are, not because of anything we do or have done, not because of our faith, our heritage, our income, our position, our reputation or any other aspect of our lives. We deserve love because we were made by a God Who designed us to receive love and He will never stop trying to give His love to us. The question is: “will we recognize how loving He is and accept His love?”

## Summary

As love cannot function when backed by force or threats of force, God has used a demonstration in the life and self-sacrificing death of His Son to attract us to Him.

“We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

It is not us loving Him for fear of punishment or even for hope of reward but only a response to what He has done that will help us to truly love Him and others.

Don't miss the point that all of God's law is meant for our good, not for His. Understanding this will make a difference when you attempt to understand His law.

While this glossary is meant as a reference work, the logical order in trying to understand the character of God and the gospel is to start with love and then look at law. Go to **the entry for law** in the glossary.

# Mark

**Traditional Legal Model** – Mark as in “the mark of the beast” is often connected with Sunday worship. Sometimes (incorrectly) it is seen as an outward symbol on the forehead.

**Biblical Healing Model** – There is the day of worship connection but mark, in this context, is also connected to character. Those who have the mark of the beast will have a character to match the beast while those who have the seal of God will have the character of God.

**Dictionaries** do not define “mark” as used in the phrase “mark of the beast.”

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a **mark** (G5480) in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the **mark** (G5480), or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” (Rev 13:16-17)

Here is the definition for the original Greek word for “mark,” (charagma) and two related words from <https://www.messie2vie.fr/bible/strongs>:

**5480 charagma** χάραγμα (from the same as G5482) – a scratch or etching, i.e., stamp (as a badge of servitude), or sculptured figure (statue)

**5481 charakter** χαρακτήρ (from the same as G5482) – a graver (the tool or the person), i.e., (by implication) engraving (“character”), the figure stamped, i.e., an exact copy or (figuratively) representation

**5482 charax** χάραξ – a stake, i.e., (by implication) a palisade or rampart (military mound for circumvallation in a siege)

Notice for 5480: “a badge of servitude” as in “who do you serve?”

These three words (5480, 5481, 5482) are all related. The English word “character” does not appear in the KJV but notice the Greek word G5481 above – “**charakter**.” It appears only once in the Bible:

“Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the **express image (G5481)** of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;” (Heb 1:3)

We could say from that: “Jesus is the brightness of His Father’s glory and the ‘charakter’ of His Father’s person.”



Dictionary.com states that the origin of the English word “character” is the Greek word *charakter*:

1275–1325; <Latin <Greek *charaktēr* graving tool, its mark, equivalent to *charak-* (base of *charáttein* to engrave) + *-tēr* agent suffix; replacing Middle English *caractere* <Middle French <Latin, as above

It seems legitimate to say the Son has the same character as His Father and there are many other verses supporting that. Now look at this verse:

“Who (Jesus) is the image (G1504) of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” (Col 1:15)

“Image” is from the Greek word “*eikon*” (G1504) with the meaning “an image, figure, likeness.” So, we can see that Col 1:15 is saying much the same as (Heb 1:3): Jesus has the “image,” “the express image,” or the likeness of His Father. “*Eikon*” is also used in this verse:

“And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his (the beast’s) **image** (*eikon*).” (Rev 16:2)

If “*eikon*” can mean character as suggested above, could worship of the image of the beast be equivalent to worshipping (putting value on) his character?

Summarizing the material above:

- Jesus is the express image (“*charakter*”) of His Father (Heb 1:3)
- “*Charakter*” is the source of the English word “character”
- So Jesus has the character (English equivalent of “*charakter*”) of His Father
- Jesus is also the image (“*eikon*” = likeness) of His Father (Col 1:15)
- So “*eikon*” (likeness) and “*charakter*” (character) are similar.
- People will worship the image (“*eikon*” – likeness/character) of the beast (Rev 16:2)
- People who value/worship that image will become like or take on the character of the beast.

## The Effect of Worship

Let’s consider the last point in the list above more closely. Could worshipping the image of the beast include have the meaning of putting value or worth on the character of the beast? What is it that we worship about God? What does worship mean?

**Worship = worth + ship**

**worth** = worthiness, value

**-ship** as a suffix means the state or condition of being something as in:

friendship = the state of being a friend

apprenticeship = the condition of being an apprentice

relationship = the state of being related

We worship someone/something that we consider to be worthy or of value. And we tend to become like that which we value:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

That is often referred to as “the beholding principle” which is well-documented. That this effect will be a factor for God’s people is shown by this verse:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

And this advice is given (for good reason):

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.” (Phil 4:8)

Notice that the mark of the beast is received in the forehead, not on it. It is not a physical mark. This is not the mark of the beast as some claim:

So, while many understand the mark of the beast to be connected with Sunday worship in contrast to the Biblical Sabbath, it seems there also may be a connection to character. To worship the beast is to put value on and become like his character. Worship of God, on the other hand, will make one more like Him.



Likely, no one reading this website would profess to or knowingly worship the beast. However, holding erroneous concepts of the character of God which are actually characteristic of the beast will tend to influence one towards that character and, ultimately, to accept the mark of the beast. Be sure you take the time to correctly understand the character of God.

# Mediator

- see entry for "[intercession](#)"

# Mercy

Mercy is understood to include forgiveness of sins and more.

**Traditional Legal Model:** Removing or lessening the penalty for sin that "justice" demands in response to the sinner meeting the condition of repentance or a plea for mercy by the sinner.

**Biblical Healing Model:** Granting mercy is doing what is best for the sinner, without condition, and is the just or right thing to do. Mercy for sinners is always available but, like forgiveness, it must be received.

## Dictionary.com

**mercy**, noun

"compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender, an enemy, or other person in one's power; compassion, pity, or benevolence:" (www.dictionary.com)

## Webster's 1828

**mercy**, noun

"1. That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; **the disposition that tempers justice**, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries, and to forbear punishment, or **inflict less than law or justice will warrant**." (www.Webstersdictionary1828.com)

Webster defines "temper" as "1. To mix so that one part qualifies the other; to bring to a moderate state; as, to temper justice with mercy."

That is implying some mixture of justice and mercy as in some degree of mercy and not quite all the punishment that justice demanded. It puts mercy and justice in opposition to each other - the added mercy lessens the full measure of justice. But isn't God ever-merciful?

# God is Merciful

Scripture indicates that God is merciful and will not stop being merciful:

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for **his mercy endureth for ever**." (1 Chron 16:34)

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, **our God is merciful.**" (Psalm 116:5)

God is described as merciful. He is not merciful one day and unmerciful the next. When God revealed His glory or character at Moses request this is what He said:

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful** and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," (Exo 34:6)

He revealed aspects of His character and the first He mentioned was that He was merciful.

"The Hebrew word translated mercy comes from the root word used for the womb. This conveys the idea of God being like a mother whose gut feeling is that of tender love, compassion and protectiveness toward her children. This would involve many emotions including a sense of intimate nurturing along with powerful and deep affections. When we say God is merciful in essence we are saying God is 'wombish'."

From **Floyd Phillips' Dictionary of Religious Word and**

**Terms** at: <http://clayfootsteps.blogspot.com/2006/01/dictionary-of-religious-word-and-terms.html>

In order to understand that God is always 100% merciful, there are two questions that need to be answered:

1. Does mercy temper justice?
2. Is mercy always available?

## Does Mercy Temper or Lessen Justice?

Here is one statement arguing that God cannot be completely merciful and just at the same time

"God cannot be both wholly merciful and just. If God is entirely merciful, He must let us evade the consequences of our sin, and He will not be just since sin goes unpunished. On the other hand, **if God is fully just, He must punish our sin fully without holding back and that would mean that He is unmerciful!** How is this possible?"

(<http://www.thefellowship.site/blog/2016/11/18/god-of-paradox-merciful-and-just>)

Here is a similar statement

"Mercy is forgiving the sinner and withholding the punishment that is justly deserved."  
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/definition-of-mercy.html>)

These ideas come from a misunderstanding of the meaning of **justice** and of **punishment** and of the principles of sowing and reaping:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man **soweth**, that shall he also **reap**." (Gal 6:7)

In the Biblical Healing Model, **justice is doing the right thing** which is to restore to a right state, to heal and to save. It is right to treat others as we would wish to be treated, to not hold grudges and to not keep account of sins. It is right for God to forgive sins and **God's forgiveness** is always freely available without condition.

God is described in scripture as being just:

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." (Deut 32:4)

## Is Mercy Always Available?

Just as forgiveness is a two-part transaction being both given and received, so is mercy when it comes to forgiveness. Here mercy and forgiveness are equated:

"**Pardon**, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy **mercy**, and as thou hast **forgiven** this people, from Egypt even until now." (Num 14:19)

This verse shows that if we are open to receiving mercy we can simply go to the throne of mercy in prayer with openness to receive it and it is ours.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy**, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

When speaking of mercy, as in sending physical blessings, it is not necessarily a two-part transaction.

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt 5:45)

So mercy is always available; it is automatic for many physical blessings and, while it must be received for forgiveness, it is always freely available.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to **love mercy**, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

If we are to "love mercy" doesn't that mean we should do the merciful thing? But we are also to "do justly." How are both accomplished at the same time? Again, the just thing to do is to give mercy, to act with love, compassion and forgiveness to others just as God does for us.

## King David and Mercy

Did God deal with **King David** and his sins according to justice or mercy? David understood God to be merciful:

"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very **great are his mercies**: but let me not fall into the hand of man." (1 Chronicles 21:13)

God did treat David with great mercy (considering the gravity of David's sins) but we would not say that God was unjust in what He did.

## Mercy Denied?

"One who shows no mercy to others cannot expect God's [mercy](https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/eng/hbd/m/mercy-merciful.html)." (<https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/eng/hbd/m/mercy-merciful.html>)

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:13)

"Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I **forgave** thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had **compassion** on thy fellowservant, even as I had **pity** on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." (Matt 18:32-34)

Why can one who shows no mercy not expect God's mercy?

The ungrateful servant in Matthew 18 was granted mercy but the evidence is that he did not receive or accept that mercy as an act of mercy. He could have been thinking:

- "Hah, I got away with it" or
- "That fool (thinking of his master?), I wouldn't have done that."

Actually, receiving mercy would include a feeling of gratitude and acknowledging the wrong done.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain [receive] mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:1-2)

If a person judges others in an unmerciful manner, they will not be capable of understanding that God does extend mercy.

# Murder

- see entry for "[kill](#)"

# Name

In both gospel models, of course, names are recognized and used as identifying labels. Beyond that, there are variations in emphasis of different aspects.

**Traditional Legal Model** – At times, great importance is put on use of the correct name and pronunciation especially of divine names and you had better use them. The Jews went too far with valuing the name (as a label) of God, to the point they forbade its use lest someone should use it incorrectly and even its original pronunciation has been lost.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Names have often (and especially in scripture) had great significance in relation to the character of the person they were given to. In many cases, “name” used in connection with God is a reference to His character.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### **Name** (noun)

1. a word or a combination of words by which a person, place, or thing, a body or class, or any object of thought is designated, called, or known.

5. a distinguished, famous, or great reputation; fame: to make a name for oneself.([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Jan. 20, 2019)

**Webster’s 1828 Dictionary** – The classic dictionary from two centuries ago brings out meanings closer to what we see in scripture.

### **Name** (noun)

1. That by which a thing is called; the sound or combination of sounds used to express an idea, or any material substance, quality or act; an appellation attached to a thing by customary use, by which it may be vocally distinguished from other things...

4. Reputation; character; that which is commonly said of a person; as a good name; a bad *name*

5. Renown; fame; honor; celebrity; eminence; praise; distinction.

6. Remembrance; memory. The Lord shall blot out his *name* from under heaven. Deuteronomy 29:20.



8. Authority; behalf; part; as in the *name* of the people. When a man speaks or acts in the *name* of another, he does it by their authority or in their behalf, as their representative. [eg Exo 5:23]

10. In Scripture, the *name* of God signifies his titles, his attributes, his will or purpose, his honor and glory, his word, his grace, his wisdom, power and goodness, his worship or service, or God himself.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/name>)

Names in Hebrews and other Near Eastern cultures had great significance, often being symbolic of character, personality, purpose or reputation. There are many cases of God designating the name to be given a person (Ishmael, Isaac, Solomon, Mahershalalhashbaz (how would you like that one?) or even changing a person's name to reflect a later change in the person (Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Saul to Paul). Obviously, God attaches more significance to names than just an identifier. Many mentions of God's name are references to His reputation, character or perhaps both, depending on the context.

It is interesting how one name change works out in English:



Hereditary family names (surnames) were little used. To further distinguish identity another identifier could be added such as:

- Joshua the son of Nun (parentage)
- Rahab the harlot (occupation)
- Elijah the Tishbite (tribe, family group)
- Saul of Tarsus (city of origin)

Compounded names from two or more words were used such as:

- Ichabod – the glory is departed
- Abadan – my father is judge
- Loammi – not my people

Many names had reference to God by including one of His names or parts thereof:

- Nathanael – God has given
- Hezekiah – Yahweh has strengthened
- Jahzerah – whom God leads back

## Name Variations and Pronunciation

The Bible uses many names and titles for God often because those are designating particular aspects of His character. This helps to show that name and character are closely related. People will often put great emphasis on knowing and using what they believe to be the correct name and pronunciation. Variations of the name Jesus can include: Joshua, Yahshua, Yashua, Yehoshua, Yesha, Yeshua, Yeshu and Yesua. I would never fault anyone for using what they believe to be the correct name. More important though is to understand the connection with character.

## Names Have Meaning

With that in mind, many verses reveal additional meaning. Let's look at some examples and, keeping in mind that name can designate character, see what they might suggest about God's character:

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13).

To “believe on the name” would NOT mean:

- to simply believe that there was a name Jesus (or Yeshua, as it would have been pronounced in His day) as we believe someone is named Bob.
- to believe that Jesus or Yeshua or whatever variation was the name of the One we understand to be the Savior, the Son of God.

But to believe in His character.

“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” (Psa 9:10)

You trust in a person not because of the what they are called but because they have given evidence to you of having a trustworthy character. God is worthy of our trust.

When Moses asked God to see His glory, God replied:

“... I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” (Exo 33:19)

God’s reply linked His glory with His name. Then, when He actually passed before Moses, He said:

“And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.” (Exo 34:6-7)

God said He would proclaim His name and when He actually did it He listed character attributes closely linking the two.

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” (1 John 3:23-24)

When “name” is used in this way, it does not mean the word by which a person is called, but rather the whole nature or character of the person as far as we know or understand it.

This verse suggests that a good character (including, for example, honesty) is better than riches that might be gained by dishonesty:

“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.” (Pro 22:1)

“A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” (Eccl 7:1)

## Profaning God’s Name

Here are verses that connect **profaning God’s name** not with mispronouncing it but with **misbehavior**:

“And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because **he hath given of his seed unto Molech**, to defile my sanctuary, and **to profane my holy name**.” (Lev 20:3)

“As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but **pollute ye my holy name** no more with your gifts, and **with your idols.**” (Eze 20:39)

“In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even **defiled my holy name by their abominations** that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.” (Eze 43:8)

“That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and **a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:**” (Amos 2:7)

The connection of name to character is illustrated by a story of Alexander the Great finding one of his soldiers sleeping while on guard duty. On learning that the soldier's name was also Alexander, Alexander the Great told him “Soldier, either change your name or change your conduct.”

To guard one's good name is to uphold the reputation, not to pronounce it correctly.

See the study **[Sacred Names – Important to Use?](https://characterofgod.org/sacred-names/)** (<https://characterofgod.org/sacred-names/>) for much more evidence that it is associating the right character with the name not the right pronunciation that is important.

## Of the Lord

### “Was it of the LORD” (for Samson to Marry a Pagan?)

It was "of the Lord" is often used to pin responsibility on God for actions that do not reflect a God of love. Even when the Bible itself says that, we must consider idiomatic expression, the context and what the Bible says elsewhere about God's character.

**Traditional Legal Model:** "It was of the Lord" or God's plan for Samson to do what he did to give an occasion to fight against the Philistine's oppression of His people.

**Biblical Healing Model:** "It was of the Lord" for Samson to do what he did in the sense that God allowed it as He honors free-will choices but it is never "of the Lord" for a person to commit a sin.

"And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. 3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well. 4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was **of the LORD**, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. (Judges 14:1-4)

The question is does “of the Lord” mean “from the Lord”? Was that His intent? In the context, Samson demanded to marry a Philistine woman against the protests of his parents. This was a direct violation of God's commands to His people against marrying pagan women:

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." (Deut 7:3-4)

### Did God Really Want That?

If we read Judges 14:4 literally, it *appears* as if God is the direct cause of someone violating His commandments: "... **it was of the Lord**." This makes God's character appear questionable. It could imply that Samson's lust and willingness to marry a pagan was the result of God's doing.

Commentaries suggest that even though this was a clear violation of God's divine statute, God had a "secret purpose" in bringing this about, which was what?

"... he sought an occasion against the Philistines."

Grammatically, the "he" in verse 4 is the Lord. Some might say that the end (the destruction of Israel's enemies) justifies the means (a little sin). However, if an all-wise God must move people to sin in order to fulfill His purposes—*secret* or otherwise, then isn't there a problem? He can be neither wise nor holy.

"But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom 3:5-6)

Will God sin or tempt to sin to carry out His will? See a definition of **vengeance** as it applies to God. God does not need to use our ways to bring about His purposes. Furthermore, His ways are quite different than ours as in the case of **anger or wrath**:

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)

Furthermore, God would never subject man to temptation for any reason.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:" (James 1:13)

## Reconciling "of the Lord" with a God of Love

So how do we reconcile Judges 14:4 with the truth that God does not want, need or use sin to accomplish His plans?

Certain expressions in Scripture, when rendered "word for word" in English, need to be understood from the perspective of the original language. The word-for-word meaning might not reveal the actual intent of the original words. We call that an idiom.

For example, the phrase "It was of the Lord" does not necessarily mean that God was the "divine manipulator" of the event:

"It is a solemn, but not unusual expression in the Hebrew tongue, to say of a thing beyond measure great, that it is **of the Lord**; not always meaning hereby, that God himself is the immediate cause of it, but signifying it to be such, that naturally no account is easy to be given of it." (Shuckford, Samuel The Sacred and Profane History of the World. Connected from the Creation of the World to the Dissolution of the Assyrian Empire; London: W. Baynes, 1808, p39-40)

This is referred to as "the Hebrew idiom of permission." See many [more examples](#)

(<https://characterofgod.org/i-create-evil/>) of writers who recognized that God was often said to do what He merely allowed to happen.

While explaining the authority to remit sins that our Lord delegated to His apostles, Thomas Jackson writes:

".... and this authority our Saviour expresses according to a well-known idiom of the Jews' language. It is no wonder, then, **that God is said to do that which He permitted men to do**, when they had by their sins provoked Him to withdraw from them the restraints of His providence and grace. Inattention to Scripture forms of expression is one of the most fruitful sources of theological error." (Emphasis added)  
(Jackson, Thomas **The Providence of God, Viewed in the Light of Holy Scripture**; London: John Mason, 1862, p300-01)

Jackson noted that our neglect of Hebrew idioms is a major source of error. No doubt, inattention to this truth has led many to read in Scriptures such as Judges 14:4 the false idea that God moved Samson to sin.

Jackson goes on to explain how Judges 14:4 is to be understood through the lens of this Hebrew idiom of permission:

"Samson's marriage with a heathen woman, belonging to the original inhabitants of Canaan, was a direct violation of the law of God. He had said to His people, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." (Deut. vii. 3.) When Samson set his heart upon such an alliance, his parents attempted to dissuade him from the enterprise, and urged him to turn his attention to some daughter of Israel, as his future wife; but in this it is said, "His father and his mother knew not that it was **of the Lord**, that He sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." (Judges xiv. 4.) The meaning, we apprehend, is, not that it was "of the Lord" that Samson should break His law; but that as Samson was bent upon this unholy connexion, and would not be satisfied without it, God would **not interpose His power to prevent it, but would overrule it for good**, as He often does the evil actions of bad men. To Samson and his family the consequences of this marriage were most disastrous, as might be expected; but it led to beneficial results so far as the people of Israel were concerned. At this time they suffered greatly under the oppressive dominion of the heathen, who still dwelt in the land. By means of this marriage Samson was brought into direct intercourse with these oppressors; he destroyed their power, and liberated his own people, though he brought upon himself great dishonour, and even lost his life. Samson sinned, and endured the bitter penalty of his waywardness and folly; but "it was **of the Lord**" to **bring good out of the evil**, by making it a means of relief to His suffering people."  
(Jackson, Thomas **The Providence of God, Viewed in the Light of Holy Scripture**; London: John Mason, 1862, p301-2)

## Bringing Good Out of a Bad Situation

It was Samson who was determined to violate God's clear commands. God, being an omni-resourceful God, would find a way through Samson's rebellion to accomplish His purpose for Israel. Nevertheless, this does not infer that God authored the event. That is why we must read Judges 14:4 as *idiomatic* rather than *literal*.

Another comment:

"The sin of Samson must not be attributed to the Lord, but the deliverance of the Israelites by Samson was from the Lord. Remember, **scriptural language frequently attributes directly to God what he merely permits.**"

(Kaiser Jr., Walter C. **Hard Sayings of the Bible**, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996, p196-7)

Scriptures appearing to make God the author of sin must be read in a **permissive sense**. While God allowed Samson to sin (exercise his free will) and had the ability to work around his sin to accomplish His goal, this does not mean that God wanted or condoned the sin itself.

In the description of Samson's behavior, there is no direct mention of any influence on God's part.

"This chapter opens with the courtship and marriage, which was properly reproved by his parents as contrary to the Mosaic law. Samson, as is often the case with only and darling sons, was wayward; he had not been subjected to control, and would not now submit to it. The matter, however, was "of the Lord:" **not by his direction or approbation, but by the permission of his providence**; and it formed an essential link in that chain of events which led to the liberation of Israel from the Philistines." (Patton, William (Ed.) **The Cottage Bible and Family Expositor: Genesis-Song of Solomon**: Hartford: Case, Tiffany, & Burnham, **1842**, p383)

Any Scripture which seems to make God appear to be the author of sin, sickness and catastrophe must be considered from the perspective of Hebrew idioms. Perhaps a better rendering of Judges 14:4 would be:

"But his father and his mother knew not that the LORD **would overrule this** to bring about His original intentions to deliver Israel." (Jud 14:4, paraphrased)

There is yet another way to understand this passage. It could be that it is "of the Lord" (of His ways) to always allow free will. So it was not "of the Lord" that Samson did what he did but "of the Lord" to allow Samson's free-will actions.

Remember too, that Samson is included in the Hall of Faith of Hebrews chapter 11:



"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and *of* Barak, and *of* **Samson**, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:" (Heb 11:32)

## It was "of the Lord" in Joshua

There is one other case in the Bible (KJV) of "it was of the Lord" referring to an action inconsistent with that of a non-violent God.

"There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. 20 For **it was of the Lord to harden their hearts**, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Joshua 11:19-20)

The action attributed to the Lord in that case was to harden their hearts. This is similar to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the Exodus discussed on [this page](https://characterofgod.org/hearts-hardened/) (https://characterofgod.org/hearts-hardened/) which shows that, really, Pharaoh hardened his own heart in reaction to God's appeals to him to change his ways. Notice that the result of the action in Joshua was due to Israel not God.

# Overthrow

**Traditional Legal Model** – To overthrow, as understood in the case of Nineveh, is God’s work to destroy a people/city as punishment for their wickedness.

**Biblical Healing Model** – To overthrow, as in that case, can also refer to God’s work to change the hearts of the people.

The point of this study is to show, using the case of Nineveh, that when God is said “to overthrow” it can mean other than destruction from Him.

## Relevant Dictionary Definitions

### A Modern Definition

#### Overthrow (verb)

1. to depose, as from a position of power; overcome, defeat, or vanquish: to overthrow a tyrant.
  2. to put an end to by force, as a government or institution.
  3. to throw or knock down; overturn; topple:
  4. Archaic. to destroy the sound condition of (the mind).
- (www.dictionary.com)

### Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

#### Overthrow (verb)

1. To turn upside down.
2. To throw down.
3. To ruin; to demolish.

#### Overthrow (noun)

3. Defeat; discomfiture; as the *overthrow* of enemies.
- (www.webstersdictionary1828.com)

As we are especially examining the use of words in relation to God’s character, this passage is important:

“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and **preach unto it** the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days’ journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be **overthrown**.”  
(Jonah 3:1-4)

This passage is commonly understood as a threat to physically destroy the city of Nineveh including the killing of all of its inhabitants. (Note that while Nahum, writing in about 660 BC, wrote about Nineveh's destruction he was referring to an event about 200 years later.)

However, there is an interesting clue in verse 2. "Preach unto it" must be referring to the people of Nineveh. You don't literally preach to a city – buildings and walls. If "Nineveh," in verse 2, is referring to the people of Nineveh, then, in verse 4, it is also referring to the people and would mean there would be a turning of or within the people. Could that be referring to repentance?

## Would God Do That?

We could also ask: "Does God personally destroy those who turn against Him?" (as in the case of [Sodom and Gomorrah](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#sodom) <https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#sodom>) The word "overthrown" in Jonah 3:4 is translated from the Hebrew word "haphak" (H2015). Its uses in the KJV are:

AV-turn 57, overthrow 13, overturn 5, change 3, turn ... 6, become 1, came 1, converted 1, gave 1, make 1, perverse 1, perverted 1, retired 1, tumbled 1; 94

It is interesting that the same original word is used to describe the heart of God and his feelings towards Israel:

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is **turned** (H2015) within me, my repentings are kindled together." (Hosea 11:8)

The "how shall I give thee up?" etc are rhetorical questions – because of His great love it pains Him greatly to even consider it. Mine (God's) heart is "**destroyed**"? It can't mean that. Note that God never said He would destroy Nineveh. Could He have been predicting a turning or a changing of the heart of the people of Nineveh (which is what actually happened)?

In reference to Israel, Hosea later wrote:

"O Israel, **thou hast destroyed thyself**; but in me *is* thine help." (Hosea 13:9)

God did not need to actively destroy either Israel or Nineveh. Why did God need to do anything? The Ninevites sinful course would have led to **self-destruction** as happened to Israel. In so many cases, [sin brings its own punishment](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/) (<https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/>) as an inevitable result.

This all started because of the evil of Nineveh:

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.” (Jonah 1:2)

What should a merciful God do in reaction to such a state of wickedness? How about an appeal to change the heart? Remember that:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish**, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

To overthrow the city as in destroying it and its inhabitants would not only cut off any further opportunity for them to come to repentance; it would go against God’s own will.

## Other “Overthrows”

There are other Biblical uses of the word “overthrow” that very much sound like physical destruction. For example:

“And ye shall **overthrow (05422)** their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.” (Deuteronomy 12:3)

However, in that case, which is not speaking of God destroying, the word “overthrow” is translated from a different Hebrew word: “nathats” (H5422) which is translated in these ways:

AV-break down 22, throw down 5, destroy 5, cast down 3, beat down 3, pull down 2, break out 1, overthrow 1; 42

The destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim is described using the word “overthrow” (“mahpekah,” H4114) which comes from “haphak.”

“*And that* the whole land thereof *is* brimstone, and salt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the **overthrow** of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:” (Deuteronomy 29:23)

H4114 מהפכה mahpekah mah-pay-kaw’

from **02015**; n f; [BDB-246a] {**See TWOT on 512 @@ “512d”**}

AV-overthrow 6; 6

1) overthrow, destruction

1a) always of Sodom and Gomorrah

Except perhaps (Isaiah 1:7: “as overthrown by strangers”)

In the case of those cities, there was a definite destructive overthrow but the overthrow was not the work of God as evidenced by a **correct understanding of the words “anger” and “wrath.”** God’s work would have been to appeal to those cities to mend their ways to avert the destruction.

That such appeals are not always successful is evidenced by:

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to **turn the hearts** of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)

We know that most people will not be prepared for the Lord’s return but God makes every effort to give them opportunity to do so.

God’s anger and wrath is His reluctant withdrawal to allow people to experience the consequences of their free-will decisions or, at times, the forces of nature from which He had previously been protecting them. There are many cases in which it is worded as though God did the destruction, when it was a case of [God being said to do what He merely allowed or permitted](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/). (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/)

Examples include the stories of [Job](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#job) (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#job) and the [fiery serpents](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#fiery-serpents) (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#fiery-serpents) in the wilderness.

It is when we rebel and don’t want His involvement that He honors our free-will decisions and backs off allowing the natural consequences of our actions to occur.

## Penal Substitution\*

(supplemental term)

Human society uses a penal justice system based on payment of penalties for infractions of laws. Religion has adopted this as the **penal substitution theory of atonement** in which justice demands the imposition of punishment. Legal payment is either made by the sinner or by Jesus' sacrifice on the sinner's behalf.

Penal substitution is one of seven theories of the atonement. They correspond to the seven levels of moral development and are well described in [this article](https://comeandreason.com/the-seven-levels-of-moral-decision-making/) (<https://comeandreason.com/the-seven-levels-of-moral-decision-making/>) by [Dr. Timothy Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>)

## Perfection

**Traditional Legal Model** - Perfection is the standard God requires of us and anything less displeases Him. We can be accepted as perfect by God if we claim Christ's perfect record to replace our own imperfect one.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Perfection of our relationship with Him is what God is really seeking more than perfect compliance to a list of rules just as a loving parent desires a close relationship with a child. Of course, He also wants us to keep His rules as they are all designed for our blessing.

"Be ye therefore **perfect** (G5046), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt 5:48)

Has that verse ever challenged you? Does it seem like an unattainable requirement? Here are more:

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

"For the **perfecting** (G2677) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect** (G5046) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Eph 4:12-13)

Are we being called to a standard that is beyond our capability to achieve? Is perfection, however that is measured, relationship-based or performance-based or both? Do we even understand perfection correctly? Even when we do obey, is that obedience tainted with our impure motives?

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

#### **Perfection**, noun

The state of being perfect or complete, so that nothing requisite is wanting; as *perfection* in an art or science; *perfection* in a system of morals.

**3.** Moral *perfection* is the complete possession of all moral excellence, as in the Supreme Being; or the possession of such moral qualities and virtues as a thing is capable of.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/>)

Here are some definitions of Greek words translated as "perfect" from the On-line Bible:

#### **5046 τέλειος teleios tel'-i-os**

from **5056**; adj;

AV-perfect 17, man 1, of full age 1; 19

- 1) brought to its end, finished
- 2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness
- 3) perfect
- 4) that which is perfect
- 4a) consummate human integrity and virtue
- 4b) of men
- 4b1) full grown, adult, of full age, mature

#### **5048 τελειόω teleioo tel-i-o'-o**

from **5046**; v;

AV-make perfect 12, perfect 4, finish 4, fulfil 2, be perfect 1, consecrate 1; 24

- 1) to make perfect, complete
- 1a) to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end
- 2) to complete (perfect)
- 2a) add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full
- 2b) to be found perfect
- 3) to bring to the end (goal) proposed
- 4) to accomplish
- 4a) bring to a close or fulfilment by event
- 4a1) of the prophecies of the scriptures

5056 τέλος telos *tel'-os* - end, goal  
 2677 καταρτισμός *katartismos* = equipping

## Has Any Human Ever Been Perfect?

Here are verses that describe certain Bible characters as perfect:

"These *are* the generations of Noah: **Noah** was a just man *and* **perfect** in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God." (Gen 6:9)

The marginal note for perfect is "whole-hearted, blameless"

"But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of **Asa** was **perfect all his days**." (2 Chron 15:17)

Other versions use the similar word "blameless" or words such as "loyal" or "faithful." Of course, Asa did not live a perfect as in sinless life as the Bible tells us that all have sinned (Rom 3:23).

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* **Job**; and that man was **perfect** and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."  
 (Job 1:1)

Despite those descriptions it is hard to see absolute perfection in any of those men. Didn't **Noah** end up in a drunken stupor (in chapter 9)? Was **Asa** perfect **all** his days - all his life? Did **Job** have a perfect understanding of God? Adam and Eve could have been described as sinless but only from their creation to the point when they sinned.

In every use of the word "perfect" we have to consider the context and who is being described as "perfect"? Like man's wrath differs from **God's wrath** (<https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/>), perhaps perfection can mean something different when used in reference to God:

"*As for* God, his way *is* **perfect**; the word of the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him." (2 Sam 22:31)

God (alone) could be considered 100% perfect in the ultimate sense we use the word "perfect" today - without the slightest flaw; never making a mistake; never having a wrong thought or motive. Here is an example of the gospel writer Luke claiming for himself what we would expect (thinking of perfection in the ultimate sense) only of God:

"It seemed good to me also, having had **perfect** understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus," (Luke 1:3)



It seems that perfection can mean less than what many would understand (when applied to other than God). For example, Luke, claiming "perfect understanding" in the verse above, got much of his information from Paul who was not even a first-hand witness of many of the events included in the gospel of Luke. Luke even reported the words of Jesus differently than other gospel writers. At times, they did not quote perfectly, word-for-word what was said. While the reporting could be said to not be imperfect, they were inspired to write what they did without it being dictated to them word for word. "Perfect" can vary in meaning.

## Is Perfection the Same as Sinlessness?

Jesus was always sinless:

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet **without sin**." (Heb 4:15)

"For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who **knew no sin**; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor 5:21)

The Bible is quite clear that He never sinned but can that be equated with Him being always perfect? Consider these verses:

"For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect** through sufferings." (Heb 2:10)

"Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience** by the things which he suffered; And **being made perfect**, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" (Heb 5:8-9)

As a man, He learned and developed character as we can do.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and **became obedient unto death**, even the **death of the cross**." (Phil 2:8)

Learning implies previously not knowing and therefore less than perfect knowledge. This, of course, is speaking of His knowing during His incarnation.

"And Jesus **increased** in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52)

If Jesus "increased in wisdom," He had less than perfect wisdom at one time (as a human) and that level of wisdom increased. So, while He was always sinless, He was not always perfect in

the performance of everything He did. We could ask of Him "did He ever cut a board too short?" or "did he ever miss hitting a nail on the head?"

It is evident that perfection and sinlessness are not equivalent terms. Let's consider the question of our perfection more from the spiritual or relationship level.

Perhaps our standing with God is not determined by our performance but by our relationship with Him. That would involve our level of faith and trust. Do we truly know Him (not just know of Him) as in truly understanding and appreciating His character?

As we come to understand His character more - based on evidence and personal experience - our trust in Him will grow and we will be more perfectly connected to Him. Remember, any weakness in the connection in the relationship is from our side, not His.

Character (never mind perfect character) cannot be created. It must be developed by life experiences and the exercise of freewill choices.

## Why Didn't God Make Perfect Beings Who Would Never Sin?

Bible perfection for humans is, most importantly, about a mature, perfect character that completely trusts in God for everything which requires knowing what He is truly like.

Think of this. Many believe something like "if I don't keep God's laws perfectly and don't somehow have my imperfections and sins compensated for, He will punish me with fire." See **The Traditional Legal Model** Could God be pleased with that? No. It would be the equivalent of a loving parent being distressed over a child who, perhaps due to some misunderstanding, fears the parent. Compare that to this:

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, **that he understandeth and knoweth me**, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD." (Jer 9:24)

God wants us to obey, of course, even to be perfect on the performance level but that is because He knows that sins hurt us and others and it hurts Him to see us hurting:

"**In all their affliction he was afflicted**, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isa 63:9)

Even when giving His people a new heart it is primarily that they might have the proper relationship to Him:

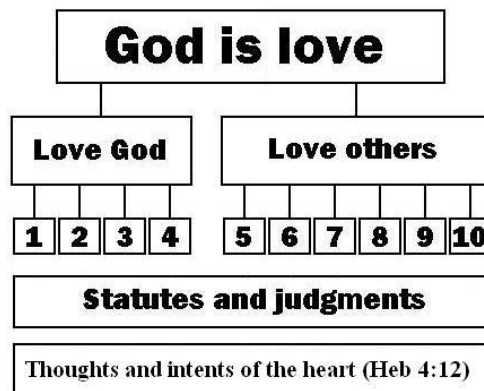
"And I will **give them an heart to know me**, that I *am* the LORD: and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God**: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."  
(Jer 24:7)

Jeremiah makes it even more clear that this is about relationship:

"But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law** in their inward parts, and write it **in their hearts**; and **will be their God, and they shall be my people**. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer 31:33-34)

God puts His law in our hearts and the result is relationship: "I ... will be their God, and they shall be my people" and that is "for" or because "they shall all know me." Knowing Him - as He really is - will result in a change of heart - the new heart (or understanding).

The keeping of His law (the performance) is a result and evidence of that but not because He has reprogrammed our wills or rewired our brains. When He says "I will put my laws" He is referring to any and all of His laws which can be understood like this:



Each level is an expansion of the one above with the most basic being God is love, the key principle of His character. This verse makes it plain that knowing God is more about really understanding His character and having a relationship than it is about being able to simply recognize or know the identity of a person:

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast **thou not known me**, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:9)

God could have made beings with no possibility of disobeying Him but they would have been merely robots. Character cannot be created or externally manipulated - that would deny free will.

## Character is Developed Over Time and Experiences

Perfect = mature = total dependence on God

The process of being perfected is an increasing maturity and growing dependence on God and it involves temptation and suffering.

"Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience** by the things which he suffered;"  
(Heb 5:8)

Do you suppose that in the process of being perfected we might learn obedience through suffering? Jesus did, and it brought Him to the point, at the end of His life, where He could, in perfect trust of His Father, be "obedient unto death." (Phil 2:8)

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, **into thy hands I commend my spirit**: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."  
(Luke 23:46)

## Does God Demand Perfection?

Why would God demand or require absolutely **sinless perfection** from us in order for us to be acceptable to Him? That would definitely be putting performance ahead of relationship. (We are always accepted (loved) by Him even though our behavior might be lacking. To **demand** perfection implies that if we don't produce it, His relationship to us will be affected.

Do we demand that of our children? It is easy to see that demanding perfection is inconsistent with love. It could only be for reasons of something like self-glorification. It might be helpful to remember the types of people that Jesus associated with on earth. He loved and ministered to them in spite of their sins all while pointing them to a higher standard.

We are told to keep the most important commandment - to hear and pay attention to God's word.

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, **Hear, O Israel**; The Lord our God is one Lord:" (Mark 12:29)

If we will do that - hear and trust enough to actually follow His directions **the result** will be:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment." (Mark 12:30)

At the end of that verse, Mark repeats that "this *is* the first commandment" referring back to the command to hear (verse 29). The "thou shalt love" is in the future indicative (rather than the imperative). It is stating the result - hear and follow God and you will become loving like Him.

The "command" to love (Deut 30:16) is not "love me or else." That would be inconsistent with a God of love Who honors free will. See the definition for "command" (coming soon).

Even the Ten Commandments can be understood as promises. And we are free to disregard those (remember Israel's attitude at Mt. Sinai - Exo 20:19) but will experience the natural consequences if we make that choice.

Here is an interesting verse:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD **require** of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

The verse does not include: "and don't forget you **must** be perfect." It is interesting to look at how "require" is rendered in various versions of that verse. Of the 27 versions listed at <https://biblehub.com>:

1 uses: "demands"  
 24 use: "requires"  
 1 uses: "wants"  
 1 uses: "... the thing that is useful that you may seek LORD JEHOVAH for yourself ..."  
 (Aramaic Bible in Plain English)

The Hebrew word "darash" (H1875; "require" in this verse in the KJV) is translated in the KJV as: **seek 84**, enquire 43, **require 12**, search 7, misc 18; total 164. It is never rendered as the stronger term "demands."

Is it possible that perfection is more offered than it is required or demanded? Did the father in the prodigal son story demand perfection of his lost son?

Bible perfection is not only about task performance. It includes maturity of character and trust in God. That maturity of character or trust is demonstrated in our actions as Job showed trust in God when he said:

"**Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:** but I will maintain mine own ways before him." (Job 13:15)

## Paul and Perfection

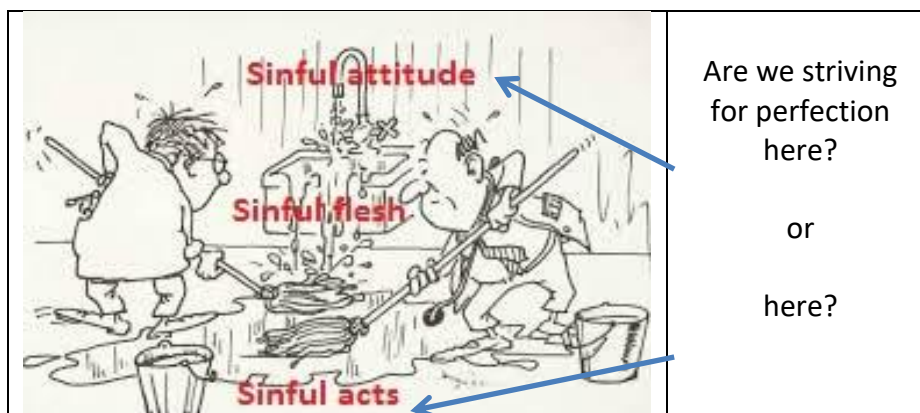
"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I **count not myself to have apprehended**: but *this* one thing I *do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I **press toward the mark** for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, **as many as be perfect**, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Phil 3:12-15)

"I count not myself to have apprehended" and "I press toward the mark" indicate that Paul saw himself as having not yet attained his goal. He then (verse 15) includes himself in "as many as be perfect." It seems, as many versions render the verse, that he is there referring to maturity of relationship. Earlier in the chapter, Paul puts that relationship ahead of anything else:

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ," (Phil 3:8)

## Is Sanctification or Perfecting of Self a Continuous Work?

Perfecting behavior will be an endless and unattainable task if we don't deal with more fundamental issues. We perform sinful acts because we have sinful natures and simply changing behavior does not change our nature.



I have often used this illustration which so well shows the three-fold problem we have. If it is at all applicable to us, it shows that the sinful acts are not the biggest problem. They (the mess on the floor) come from a sinful heart or mind or nature (the overflowing sink) which cannot but express what is within.

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matt 12:35)

"A good man out of the good treasure of the **[renewed]** heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure **[of the natural, unrenewed heart]** bringeth forth evil things." (Matt 12:35)

And the sinful flesh, mind or heart cannot be changed without some new input (what is coming out of the tap). That has to do with our attitude toward God. That is often (even subconscious) distrust of God due to wrong information about Him (For examples: He will burn me, perhaps even forever, if I don't get this right).

We need to know God (John 17:3) and truly appreciate His wonderful character and it is by that beholding that our natures can be changed:

"But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

Then what comes out of the regenerated heart, the renewed mind will look different and perfection of performance will be possible. The key is to deal with the issue at its source.

## Price

- see entry for "[ransom](#)"

## Pricks

- see entry for "[discomfited](#)"

## Probation\*

(supplemental term)

What Does Probation Mean? Here are definitions according to each model of the gospel.

**Traditional Legal Model** – A period of time allotted by God at the end of which He will examine our life record and determine whether to save us or not.

**Biblical Healing Model** – The opportunity given by God for us to decide for or against having a relationship with Him. If we allow Him to heal us then we are safe to save. We make the decision, not Him.

The main differences between the two models are:

1. Who determines when probation finally closes (covered at the page
2. Who determines a pass or fail of the terms of probation for each person

### Modern Dictionary Definition

#### **Probation, (noun)**

1. the act of testing.
2. the testing or trial of a person's conduct, character, qualifications, or the like.
3. the state or period of such testing or trial.

(<https://www.dictionary.com>)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

#### **Probation, (noun)**

The act of proving; proof.

1. Trial; examination; any proceeding designed to ascertain truth; in universities, the examination of a student, as to his qualifications for a degree.
3. Moral trial; the state of man in the present life, in which he has the opportunity of



proving his character and being qualified for a happier state.  
 Probation will end with the present life.  
 (<http://webstersdictionary1828.com>)

In our society, a time of probation is most commonly understood as a time to be on good behavior, to prove self, to demonstrate character especially after the commission of some wrong.

There is always a test, or criteria for behavior, some way to determine a pass or fail. A pass can lead to full or greater privileges; a fail to further restrictions or loss of privilege.

Whether we pass or fail in the probationary period of our lifetimes is determined by the choices we make and no one else.

## **Probation and Free Will**

Within a period of probation, we always have the option to choose to comply with the conditions of the probation or not, to exercise free will. Probation implies free will.

Imagine that a judge says you will be on probation for six months and if you obey the condition, you will no longer be on probation. He tells you the condition is that you are not to leave the country and then he orders that you be imprisoned for the next six months. Are you really on probation? Why not? – because you are not free to choose to break the conditions of the probation.

## **Examples of Probation in the Bible**

### **Adam and Eve**

There is a sense in which God was honoring man's free will to give Him a choice to obey or not. He did that by placing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden.

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen 2:15-17)

This was really a period of probation with the condition being to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That probation ended when Adam and Eve failed the test. Who determined whether the result, in their case, was a pass or a fail? They did.

Their failure led to a number of consequences that they did not escape. Were they then still on probation after they left the garden? Yes, a second period of probation was granted them the

terms of which were not centered on the tree. Their second probation, granted by the mercy of God was like ours – will we decide to trust in and follow God before our probation ends? The question of when any persons' probation will end is addressed on [this page](https://characterofgod.org/revelation-22-11/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/revelation-22-11/>)

## Daniel and His Friends

Here is a well-known example of a probationary period that was quite unusual in that it was not externally mandated but, rather, was proposed by the individuals subjecting themselves to terms they proposed.

“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.” (Dan 1:12-13)

The time period (ten days) was specified and the test included – an evaluation of their condition at the end of the period. Fortunately, they passed the test, a testimony to the value of a simple and natural diet.

## Jesus

Was the Savior Himself on probation?

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;”  
(Heb 5:8)

There is no indication that He ever disobeyed but having to learn obedience certainly implies the possibility. We know He was tempted and temptation cannot be real if there is no possibility of yielding to it.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb 4:15)

He was especially tested by Satan in the wilderness for 40 days:

“And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.” (Mark 1:13)

He was tempted at other times as well, for instance in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

Did Jesus have free will as a human? He certainly did and was perhaps most tempted right at the end:

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt 26:53)

“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” (Matt 27:42)

Could He have sinned? Yes, but praise His name, He did not. His passing that period of probation with flying colors is attested to by His reception in heaven:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;” (Rev 5:9)

## Summary

God always honors free will. To not do so would be to limit our freedom which is inconsistent with true love. Probation is the opportunity God gives us to choose Him and escape from our default lost condition. As described in [part 2 on Revelation 22:11](https://characterofgod.org/revelation-22-11/), (https://characterofgod.org/revelation-22-11/) God will not actively choose to end anyone’s probation. It is always our choices that do that.

# Propitiation

Propitiation is very misunderstood in Christianity. God does not need to be appeased by requiring payment of penalties for sin.

**Traditional Legal Model:** – the satisfaction of God’s wrath and justice by the death of His Son Who died in our place to pay the penalty we deserved.

**Biblical Healing Model:** – the symbolic place (the mercy seat of the ark) where God offers mercy. God does not require propitiation as commonly-understood.

## Modern Dictionary Definition

**Propitiation** (noun)

the act of propitiating; conciliation: the propitiation of the wrathful gods.

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/propitiation>)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

**Propitiation** (noun)

2. In *theology*, the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage his wrath and render him propitious to sinners. Christ is the *propitiation* for the sins of men.

Romans 3:25. 1 John 2:2.

(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/propitiation>)

## Propitiation Misunderstood

Here is one (unbiblical) understanding of propitiation:

“What is Propitiation?

Propitiation is a big word that means satisfaction. Because God is a holy God, His anger and justice burns against sin. And He has sworn that sin will be punished.

There must be a satisfactory payment for sin. But God said, “If I punish man for his sin, man will die and go to hell. On the other hand, if I don’t punish man for his sin, My justice will never be satisfied.”

The solution? God said that He would become our substitute. He would take the sin of mankind upon Himself in agony and blood—a righteous judgment and substitute for sin.”

(<https://www.christianity.com/jesus/following-jesus/repentance-faith-and-salvation/what-does-propitiation-mean.html>)

That description wrongly portrays God as having such **anger** at sin that He sacrifices Himself in order to satisfy His own standard of **justice** because He has determined that all sin must receive **punishment**. With all three terms so badly misunderstood in relation to God, it is no wonder such weird logic came about. It describes God as unable to forgive unless He sees blood – and that is supposed to move us to love Him? There is something wrong with that! See the three pages linked to above and then consider the Biblical and original meaning of “propitiation.”

Here are the only three uses of “propitiation” in the KJV:

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a **propitiation** (G2435) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom 3:25-26)

“And he is the **propitiation** (G2434) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the **propitiation** (G2434) for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

As we will see, this is a very poor word to use to translate the original Greek.

Here are the definitions given for the Greek words used for propitiation:

## Original Word Definitions

### **G2434 ἱλασμός hilasmos *hil-as-mos'***

a root word; n m;

AV-propitiation 2; 2

- 1) an appeasing, propitiating
- 2) the means of appeasing, a propitiation

### **G2435 ἱλαστήριον hilasterion *hil-as-tay'-ree-on***

from a derivative of **G2433**; n n;

AV-propitiation 1, mercyseat 1; 2

- 1) relating to an appeasing or expiating, having placating or expiating force, expiatory; a means of appeasing or expiating, a **propitiation**
- 1a) used of the cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, which was sprinkled with the blood of the expiatory victim on the annual day of atonement (this rite signifying that the life of the people, the loss of which they had merited

by their sins, was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that **God** by this ceremony **was appeased** and their sins expiated); hence the lid of expiation, the propitiatory

1b) an expiatory sacrifice

1c) an expiatory victim

Since G2435 comes from G2433 we should look at that word:

**2433 ἱλάσκομαι hilaskomai hil-as'-kom-ahee**

middle voice from the same as **2436**; v;

AV-be merciful 1, make reconciliation 1; 2

1) to render one's self, to appease, conciliate to one's self

1a) to become propitious, be placated or appeased

1b) to be propitious, be gracious, be merciful

2) to expiate, make propitiation for

There is only one other verse that uses "hilasterion" (G2435):

"And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the **mercyseat**; (G2435) of which we cannot now speak particularly." (Heb 9:5)

That verse suggests that "hilasterion" is a place where mercy is given – quite different from the usual meaning of propitiation.

To listen to a very good audio description of the true meaning of "propitiation go to:  
(<https://characterofgod.org/propitiation-definition/>)

So, if that word had been used in Romans 3:25, would that give the verse a different meaning?

"Whom God hath set forth *to be* a ~~propitiation~~ **mercy seat** ..."

It literally means "a place or means of **reconciliation**, a place where **atonement** or unity and at-one-ment takes place."

The only two verses that use "**hilaskomai**" (G2433) are:

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be **merciful** (G2433) to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13)

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make **reconciliation** for (G2433) the sins of the people." (Heb 2:17)

Those verses do not suggest anything like propitiation. What are the effects of the translation of a word meaning mercy seat as propitiation? They can't be good.

## Where did the Concept of Propitiation Come From?

Many (if not all) pagan cultures embrace the concept of propitiation and appeasement. Here is another example of modern misunderstanding:

“... Propitiation is an ancient word, which we as Christians have in common with other world religions. **To propitiate a god is to offer a sacrifice that turns aside the god's wrath.** Anyone who believes in a god knows that they need **some way to stay on the friendly side of that god.** So they give gifts to the god, or serve in the temple, or give alms. And if the god is angry with them, they pay a price, or make a sacrifice, or find some way to soothe the god's anger: they propitiate him.”

(<https://maney.us/blog/2014/03/25/trevin-wax-pagan-propitiation-vs-biblical-propitiation/>)

Do we really need a way to stay on the friendly side of God? What about “God is love”?

Here are verses using “propitiation” (in the KJV) as rendered in The Remedy NT:

“God presented Jesus as **the way and the means of restoration.** Now, through the trust established by **the evidence of God's character** revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the Remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate that he is right and good — because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of us being out of harmony with his design for life — yet he has been falsely accused of being unfair. 26 He did it to demonstrate at the present time how right and good he is, so that he would also be seen as being right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.” (Rom 3:25-26, The Remedy New Testament)

“He is **the reconciling Remedy** to the infection of selfishness and fear, and not just for our terminal condition: he is also the Remedy—freely available—to heal the entire world.” (1 John 2:2, The Remedy New Testament)

“This is what real love is: It is not that we have loved God, or that we have done something to get him to love us, but that he loved us so much that he sent his Son to become **the Remedy and cure** for the infection of sin and selfishness so that through him we might be restored into perfect unity with God.” (1 John 4:10, The Remedy New Testament)

# Punishment

**Traditional Legal Model** – Pain or some other penalty (including temporal and eternal death) actively imposed by God as just retribution for sins committed.

**Biblical Healing Model** – God honoring man’s free will by allowing the natural consequences of a chosen action to take place.

## From a Modern Dictionary

**Punishment** (noun)

1. the act of punishing.

**Punish** (verb, used with object)

1. to subject to pain, loss, confinement, death, etc., as a penalty for some offense, transgression, or fault

([www.dictionary.com/browse/punishment?s=t](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/punishment?s=t), accessed Sep. 17, 2019)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

**Punishment** (*noun*) Any pain or suffering inflicted on a person for a crime or offense, by the authority to which the offender is subject, either by the constitution of God or of civil society.

Divine punishments are doubtless designed to secure obedience to divine laws, and uphold the moral order of created intelligent beings.

The rewards and punishments of another life, which the almighty has established as the enforcements of his law, are of weight enough to determine the choice against whatever pleasure or pain this life can show.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/punishment>, accessed Sep. 17, 2019)

## Why Punishment?

There has long been the understanding that “If you do the crime, you do the time” – you pay the penalty. The idea is that if you sin against someone you cause them pain or loss and therefore you should also suffer pain or loss. But is that God’s way? Does He inflict punishment to exact payment?



Law and order can be kept by force or its **threat** or it can be kept by **inducements** to love or loyalty of the heart. It is one or the other – the carrot or the stick. God has chosen the carrot, (the inducement of love) because He wants a relationship based on love.



God ever offers His promises to us but, unlike the image, we are not prevented from reaching it.

If “His mercy endureth for ever” (1 Chron 16:34) He cannot be punishing because to start punishing would be to stop being merciful. But that does not mean sin is not punished. Sin always has one or more natural, negative consequences which could be called punishment. That is the whole reason a particular action is sin. God labels as sins actions that would hurt us or others and tells us not to do them because He doesn’t want to see His children suffer.

The above understanding does not agree with the dictionary definitions provided. We need to examine some original words to determine the real meaning. Please read the study on [the meaning of punishment in Hebrew](https://characterofgod.org/visit-definition/). (https://characterofgod.org/visit-definition/) For an examination of punishment in the New Testament and more on Biblical punishment see [Matt 25:46 “go away into everlasting punishment.”](https://characterofgod.org/matthew-25-46/) (https://characterofgod.org/matthew-25-46/)

## Discipline and Punishment

Some might argue that God punishes us for our good. We need to distinguish between discipline (also called chastening) and punishment and their purposes.

“For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” (Heb 12:10)

Biblical discipline or chastening is “for our good” (“profit,” KJV). This is as opposed to punishment for the purpose of the satisfaction of the one punishing to have revenge or meet the requirements of an imposed penalty.

“For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” (Heb 12:10, NASB)

## How God “Punishes”

God punishes, yes, but how does He do it?

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44)

The visitation referred to in Luke 19 was a reference to the ministry of Christ Who came to demonstrate the love of God to His people:

“The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” (Luke 4:18)

However, He did not meet the expectations about the Messiah and was rejected to the point they declared Him worthy of death:

“But they (the Jews) cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” (John 19:15)

That rejection resulted in God honoring their choice, and removing His presence with the result:

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt 23:38)

Their house was desolate in the sense that it no longer housed God’s presence. This is illustrated by the term “Ichabod” referring to when the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God’s presence, was captured and removed from Israel.

“And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken ...” (1 Sam 4:21)

The result of the removal of God’s protection from Israel in honoring their choice was that Jerusalem was destroyed – not by God but by a Roman army in 70 AD. This pattern is often repeated in scripture.

“For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this *is* the city to be visited; she *is* wholly oppression in the midst of her. 7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually *is* grief and wounds. 8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.” (Jer 6:6-8)

The result of God removing His protection from them was that the king of Babylon came and conquered them.

“And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.” (Jer 27:6-8)

So, the punishment was the result of God removing His protective presence which meant they were vulnerable to their enemies.

## A Common Biblical Formula

This follows what I call **the S-W-A-T formula** in which:

- Because of man’s **Sin**
- God in “**Wrath**” or “**anger**”
- **Accommodates** the sinner's choices
- And **Trouble** comes (from a source other than God).

See [more details and over 70 examples](https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) of the **Sin-Wrath-Accommodation-Trouble** formula. It should be clear from all those examples that when God “leaves” it is in response to an action of man in turning from God, following other gods or some sin indicating that he has done either of those.

In this passage, God says that His giving of kings into the hands of their enemies is to be a sign or example to the Jews dwelling in Egypt (verse 1):

“And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies,

and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.” (Jer 44:29-30)

God “punishes” by giving into the hand of the enemy (often so used in Jeremiah). We call it punishing because it is a bad outcome. But from God’s perspective it is Him honoring our free will, letting go, withdrawing His protection and whatever result happens, happens. When God is not active in His role of protector the result is never good.

“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?” (Job 22:15-17)

That verse is a reference to the flood where again, following the same pattern, God removed His protection in this case in response to a very direct rejection. The question is: “[did God cause or permit the flood?](https://characterofgod.org/genesis-6-13-permissive-or-causative/)” (<https://characterofgod.org/genesis-6-13-permissive-or-causative/>)

## Consequences

“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (Jer 17:10)

We usually think of this as giving punishment; payment for his evil ways. But it could be to give or allow consequences that are naturally connected to the action whether good or bad. It could also be to give the assistance needed to help him overcome his ways.



So, if God doesn’t actively inflict punishment (or other types of pain and suffering) on the wicked, what does He do to them? What does God do to

those who are infected with sin and refuse to allow God to heal them? What would you as a parent do to your adult child dying of leukemia who refused to accept a bone- marrow transplant? Wouldn’t you simply respect their freedom of choice? In doing that you would not be punishing or inflicting harm on them but they could still suffer and die and that result would be because of their refusal to be healed. This is exactly what the Bible teaches. (Adapted from [Tim Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>) – [The Question of Punishment](https://www.comeandreason.com/index.php/en/blogs-main/64-the-question-of-punishment-part-ii?highlight=WYj3aGF0IHdvdWxkIHlvdSIsInlvdSBhcyBhliwiYSBwYXJlbnQiXQ==)) (<https://www.comeandreason.com/index.php/en/blogs-main/64-the-question-of-punishment-part-ii?highlight=WYj3aGF0IHdvdWxkIHlvdSIsInlvdSBhcyBhliwiYSBwYXJlbnQiXQ==>)

“And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.” (Lev 5:17)

Some versions have the person bearing punishment, perhaps thinking it is coming directly from God:

“If someone sins and violates any of the LORD’s commandments even though he was unaware, he is still guilty and shall bear his punishment.” (Lev 5:17, Berean Study Bible)

Other versions recognize that what the sinner is bearing is the consequences, the natural result of their chosen course of action:

“If someone sins and without knowing it violates any of the LORD’s commands concerning anything prohibited, he bears the consequences of his guilt.” (Lev 5:17, Holman Christian Standard Bible)

That is more in accord with the law of sowing and reaping.

# Ransom

**Traditional Legal Model:** The legal price (Jesus' death) required by God to purchase the release of sinners and cancel the debt they owe because of their sins.

**Biblical Healing Model:** The price paid to release mankind from what held him captive: the devil's lies about God's character and man's own sinful nature.

Especially, we want to understand what it meant for Jesus to pay a ransom:

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a **ransom** for many." (Matt 20:28)

Here is an explanation from one commentary of the meaning of His ransom:

"The meaning is, that he died in the place of sinners, and that God was willing to accept the pains of his death in the place of the eternal suffering of the redeemed. The reasons why such a ransom was necessary are:

1. that God had declared that the sinner shall die; that is, that he would **punish**, or show his hatred to, all sin.
2. that all people had sinned, and, if **justice** was to take its regular course, all must perish." (Barnes' Notes on the Bible)

That definition shows an incorrect understanding of other important words such as **punishment** and **justice**. It causes people to be afraid of and avoid God instead of having that same attitude towards sin which is where the harm really comes from:

"For sin pays its wage--death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23, Good News Translation)

Note that death comes from sin itself, not from God. Such views make God out to be unforgiving and vindictive and are (even though most believe them) unbiblical.

## What is a Ransom?

In modern usage the word would most naturally be associated with a kidnapping where the kidnapper is demanding a ransom be paid before releasing his captive. Of course, the ransom is paid to the kidnapper either by the captive somehow arranging it or someone else doing it on his behalf.

In Biblical use, we need to ask: "what holds a person captive?" and there must be a Biblical answer.

The answer proposed in this study is: "the devil's lies about God's character and man's own sinful nature. Is there Bible evidence for that?"

That understanding is well-expressed in this version:

"who gave himself to free us  
**from the bondage of lies about God**  
 and **from our own selfish natures.**  
 His sacrifice proves that God wants everyone to be healed."  
 (1 Tim 2:6, The Remedy New Testament)

[The Remedy New Testament](https://characterofgod.org/resources#bible-versions), (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#bible-versions>) a version by [Tim Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>), is an expanded paraphrase that attempts to be entirely consistent with the true character of God.

Let's look at those two factors and how they hold us captive.

## Jesus Frees from Lies About God

What truth was Jesus especially working to reveal during His earthly ministry? It was the character of His Father.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **he hath declared him.**" (John 1:18)

"**If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also:** and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." (John 14:7)

"All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and **he to whom the Son will reveal him.**" (Luke 10:22)

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**" (2 Cor 4:6)

"**I have manifested thy name** unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." (John 17:6)

Notice the emphasis in those verses on knowing. What will that knowledge do?

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And **ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" (John 8:31-32)

## Jesus Frees from Sinful Natures

How did Jesus free us from that captivity? By revealing our sinful nature and providing a remedy.

"But now we are **delivered from the law**, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom 7:6)

Delivered from the law" - meaning what? It does not say delivered from the need to obey the law of God. Notice that there is another law:

"But I see **another law** in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity** to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:23)

Paul referred to this law as the law of sin and death:

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh **the law of sin.**" (Rom 7:25)

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8:2)

Jesus overcame sin and provides the example, the motivation and the power for us to do the same. (see Rev 3.21, 12:11)

## Redeemed

In what way are we redeemed and made "free from the law of sin and death"?

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as **silver and gold**, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" (1 Peter 1:18-19)

That verse uses the word "**redeemed**" in a sense similar to "ransomed." The original Greek ("lutroo" - G3084) for all three uses of "redeem" or "redeemed" in the New Testament is related to the word translated as "ransomed" ("lutron" - G3083) translated as "ransom." Note that the verse above clearly states that it is not a financial transaction: "not ... silver and gold."



Rather, it is talking about being rescued/redeemed/ransomed from a form of negative conduct: "vain conversation."

## Free Indeed

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be **free indeed**."  
(John 8:36)

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And **deliver them** who through fear of death were all their lifetime **subject to bondage**." (Heb 2:14-15)

"Destroy" in verse 14, can mean to deprive of influence or "to render idle" which will eventually happen to Satan for the 1000 years of the millennium.

Another verse mentions destroying "the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8); essentially, exposing his lies.

The ransom Jesus paid can free us from both the lies of Satan about God and from our own sinful natures - that is freedom indeed!

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim 2:6)

## Did Jesus Pay a Price as Ransom?

Did Jesus pay a price? Yes, a very large one but not as appeasement to an offended Deity. If you save your child from being hit by a bus but the only way to do it is to give your life, you have paid a large **price** (what is often called "the ultimate price") but it was not in the form of appeasement.

"For ye are bought with a **price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6:20)

"Ye are bought with a **price**; be not ye the servants of men."  
(1 Cor 7:23)

## God Wanted Knowledge of Himself, Not Sacrifices

"For I desired mercy, and **not sacrifice**; and the **knowledge of God** more than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6)

That verse certainly puts knowing God and what He is like as the priority rather than sacrifices and offerings - payment as ransom for sin. There is a [collection of verses](https://characterofgod.org/sacrifices-not-desired/) (<https://characterofgod.org/sacrifices-not-desired/>) showing that God did not want sacrifices.

To everyone who desires knowledge of God the invitation is given:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and **without price**." (Isa 55:1)

The knowledge of God and help to overcome our sinful natures is freely available. No payment, no price, no ransom needed - it's free.

The Christian song ***How Deep the Father's Love for Us*** includes these lyrics:

Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have **paid my ransom**

He paid the price, and we can gain even eternal life freely provided to us.

# Recompense

**Traditional Legal Model** - God's arbitrary act to punish or reward man's actions.

**Biblical Healing Model** - God allowing the natural results of man's actions to return to him.

## On-line Bible Definition

### Recompense

G467 ἀνταποδίδωμι antapodidomi *an-tap-od-ee'-do-mee*

from **473** and **591**; v;

AV-recompense 4, recompense again 1, repay 1, render 1; 7

- 1) **in a good sense**, to repay, requite
- 2) **in a bad sense**, penalty and vengeance

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

### Recompense, *verb transitive*

1. To compensate; to make return of an equivalent for any thing given, done or suffered; as, to *recompense* a person for services, for fidelity or for sacrifices of time, for loss or damages.
2. To require; to repay; to return an equivalent; in a bad sense.  
Recompense to no man evil for evil. Romans 12:17.

### Recompense, *noun*

1. An equivalent returned for any thing given, done or suffered; compensation; **reward**; amends; as a *recompense* for services, for damages, for loss, etc.
2. Requital; return of evil or suffering or other equivalent; as a **punishment**.

Recompense can mean either good or bad, reward or punishment.

This verse is commonly understood to be referring to God's just response to actively punish sin:

"Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to **recompense** tribulation to them that trouble you;" (2 Thess 1:6)

Since it mentions "tribulation," it would seem to be in a negative sense. Here is the view from one commentary:

"Recompense is the actual exercise of vengeance, and vengeance is the actual execution of judgment on sinners, according to their desert, without mitigation by mercy."  
(Benson Commentary)

What does the Bible itself say? Let's look at more verses:

"To me *belongeth* **vengeance**, and **recompence**; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."  
(Deut 32:35)

Recompence sounds negative being paired in that verse with vengeance. However, **the meaning of "vengeance"** has been shown to be "God allowing the sinner to experience the natural consequences of his choice to break the law in order to help him change his ways."

Here is a verse using "recompence" in a positive sense:

"The LORD **recompense** thy work, and a full **reward** be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." (Ruth 2:12)

That sounds like it could be an arbitrary reward but this is only reflecting the understanding of the speaker - Boaz, speaking to Ruth.

"For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will **recompense** them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands." (Jer 25:14)

"According to their deeds" - could be referring to either good or bad deeds. It sounds like "you reap what you sow." It points to God allowing consequences as He honors free will as in these verses:

"Who will render to every man **according to** his deeds:" (Rom 2:6)

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he **also** reap." (Gal 6:7)

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man **according as** his work shall be." (Rev 22:12)

This version really brings out that meaning for 2 Thessalonians 1:6:

"God always does what is merciful, loving and right: those who refuse the Remedy and cause harm, he will **give up to reap** the torment they have chosen—the destruction that comes from unremedied selfishness—"  
(2 Thess 1:6, The Remedy New Testament)

In taking any action, man (perhaps not always consciously) is choosing to encounter the consequences of that action. God always honors man's free-will choices. To not do so would be to force the will and this God will not do.

This verse may come to mind:

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will **recompense**, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people." (Heb 10:30)

However, it is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35 discussed earlier in this study.

Here is a verse to test the true meaning of "recompense" as it certainly sounds like the usual understanding:

"Now *is* the end *come* upon thee, and I will **send** mine **anger** upon thee, and will **judge** thee according to thy ways, and will **recompense** upon thee all thine abominations." (Eze 7:3)

This is an example of a verse being badly misunderstood due to the use of non-Biblical definitions for multiple words.

**Send** (translated from the Hebrew word "shalach" often means merely to allow. **Anger** and wrath can refer to God's action to allow man to receive the natural consequences of his actions.

God does not **judge** as in arbitrarily making a decision regarding our eternal fate. He does judge in the sense of diagnosing our condition and doing all He can to turn us around. However, we determine our own destiny as far as eternity; we judge ourselves. He only honors and confirms our free-will decisions.

The verse might be paraphrased something like this:

"Now is the end come upon you and I will, regretfully, have to **recompense** you by **allowing** you to **experience the results** of the things you have done." (Eze 7:3, paraphrased)

# Reconciliation

The meaning of reconciliation is similar in the two models; the real difference is in how reconciliation between God and man is achieved and whether it is a one-way or two-way change in relationship.

**Traditional Legal Model** – Reconciliation happens with the death of Christ allowing God to again favor man (God reconciled to man) and legally forgive his sins. Man can then know he is forgiven and the relationship of trust is reestablished (man reconciled to God).

**Biblical Healing Model** – The death of Christ, being the greatest revelation of the self-sacrificing love of God, assures man of God’s forgiveness and reconciles him to God. Reconciliation is one-way only – man to God – as God always looks with favor and infinite love on man.

## From a Modern Dictionary

**Reconciliation**, noun

an act of reconciling, as when former enemies agree to an amicable truce.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

**Reconciliation**, noun

1. The act of reconciling parties at variance; renewal of friendship after disagreement or enmity.

Reconciliation and friendship with God, really form the basis of all rational and true enjoyment.

2. In Scripture, the means by which sinners are reconciled and brought into a state of favor with God, after natural estrangement or enmity; the atonement; expiation.

([www.webstersdictionary1828.com](http://www.webstersdictionary1828.com))

A careful look at how the Bible uses reconciliation will help to establish the correct meaning. Here is an important New Testament use:

“And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:18-20)

## Reconciliation in One Direction Only

Notice the direction that is indicated:

v18 “reconciled us to himself”

v19 “reconciling the world unto himself”

v20 “be ye reconciled to God”

The other two uses of reconciliation in that passage are:

“given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (v18)

“committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (v19)

Those refer to the task of Christians working for God (“ambassadors for Christ” – v20) to convince others to be reconciled to God.

It wouldn’t make sense to mean God has given us the task of reconciling Himself to the world. That would be like God saying: “I want to be reconciled to them but just can’t bring myself to do it. I will get those who believe in me to talk me into doing it.” That would make no sense. It has to be working to reconcile **others** to God. It is those not in relationship with God who need to be changed, not God.

Thus, the passage says five times that the reconciliation is of others to God:

- “reconciled us to himself (v18)
- “given to us the ministry of reconciliation (of others to God)” (v18)
- “reconciling the world unto himself” (v19)
- “committed unto us the word of reconciliation (of others to God)” (v19)
- “be ye reconciled to God” (v20)

There is nothing to indicate that God needs to be reconciled to others. God doesn’t need to be reconciled to us; He always has the greatest level of love and concern for us.

Reconciliation is achieved through intercession. We intercede with others to reconcile them to God. That process is shown in the last diagram on the **intercessor definition** page.

## Reconciliation From What?

What state is a person in if they are in need of reconciliation to God? Perhaps some combination of fear, distrust, anger, disgust, blame, resentment and pessimism.

So, if we were to take up this ministry of reconciliation (which God has given us to do), what would that look like? What would we actually do?

We might say (and give evidence for) things like:

- You don't need to fear God, He won't harm you.
- God is trustworthy
- God is not at fault for what has happened to you.
- God really is good and He loves you

## God Reconciled to Us?

If, as in many popular views, God also needs to be reconciled to the sinner (a two-way reconciliation process), what would our assigned job of reconciliation look like? Would it involve us also pleading with God to be reconciled with a person? What might we be saying to God?

- Stop being mad at him
- Please forgive him
- Put away your plans to harm him

Really, we would be asking Him to change His mind towards sinners. But what are God's thoughts to us already?

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 1:2)

Of course, those are John's words but John was representing how God would act. Wasn't John one of God's ambassadors? This verse (spoken to those who had, because of disobedience, been carried into Babylonian captivity) also reflects God's feelings:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer 29:11)

"For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal 3:6)

## Change Your Minds to be Reconciled

How are we reconciled to God? Isn't it a change of mind (opinion, attitude) about Him? Is it possible that a person could say they trust God completely, be working in a great way for him and yet, in a difficult situation, have doubts? John the Baptist is an example of one who did. Near the end of His ministry, he began to question whether Jesus was the Messiah. Read more



about how [John the Baptist misunderstood God](https://characterofgod.org/john-the-baptist-misunderstood-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/john-the-baptist-misunderstood-god/).

We need to have our minds changed regarding God. I say minds plural in reference to each one of us because, while with our conscious mind we might mentally assent to the facts, our subconscious mind can take longer to change. See [A Being of Two Minds](https://characterofgod.org/two-minds/) (https://characterofgod.org/two-minds/) in the [Cleansing of the Sanctuary Series](https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/) (https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/).

We could become convinced, through scripture, that God does not need to be reconciled to us and still have doubts come from our subconscious mind. The subconscious mind takes time and repetition to adjust its circuits; previous patterns of thought take time to change. And so our subconscious mind with all of its deeply-ingrained past memories and understandings can influence our conscious thinking as it did for John the Baptist.

## The Reconciliation Process

How does the reconciliation process happen? The answer is given quite directly:

“... God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ ...” (2 Cor 5:18)

But what does that mean? Does Jesus, on behalf of His Father, go into our minds and change some circuits so that, in our minds, we are now happy with God? Reconciliation is a process of the mind, a change from enmity to favor and friendship as defined by Webster (quoted above) so there must be some change in thinking caused by seeing/understanding some additional knowledge. Scripture does speak of that:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor 4:6)

We are given knowledge of God by what we see in His Son Who the Bible describes as being “the express image” (Heb 1:3) of His Father? That knowledge changes or renews our minds:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom 12:2)

“Therefore if any man *be in Christ*, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor 5:17)

The renewing of the mind and the becoming new describe a process:

“And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” (Col 3:10)

The form of the Greek word that is translated as “renewed” in that verse indicates “being renewed,” a continuous process. Him that created is? – the Son of God (Heb 1:2)

[Romans 5:8-10](https://characterofgod.org/romans-5-8-10/) (<https://characterofgod.org/romans-5-8-10/>) is an important passage to help our understanding of reconciliation.

## Summary

To be fully reconciled to God we need to focus on the Savior, Who is the express image of the Father, Who loves everyone and freely forgave even those who crucified Him.

If we have any fear (of the “afraid” kind) or any doubts about God’s goodness then we are not fully reconciled to God. We may be reconciled in our conscious thinking but we also need to change our subconscious mind. That is accomplished day by day as we behold and focus on the One Who came to reveal the character of His Father.

# Redeemed

- see entry for "[ransom](#)"

# Remission

**Traditional Legal Model** - Removing the record of sin thus cancelling the need for the sinner to pay a penalty.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Healing the sinner from the damage of sin to his character as in curing a disease. (But not necessarily removing the natural consequences or after-effects of the sin.)

Dictionary definitions related to spiritual uses:

## Modern Dictionary

**Remission** noun

2. pardon; forgiveness, as of sins or offenses.

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/remission>)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Remission** noun

5. Forgiveness; pardon; that is, the giving up of the punishment due to a crime; as the *remission* of sins.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/remission>)

How do we most often hear that word used today? Isn't it in connection with cancer? It is used to mean the cancer is resolved or at last apparently cured at the time.

Does that mean the doctor has used white out on a medical record to erase and to blot out any reference to the fact a person ever had cancer? No, it means the cancer has gone into remission, the problem is apparently solved but the record is still there.

## Remission and Forgiveness

What is the most important part of remission or healing in a spiritual sense? What most needs to be healed? Let's look at some verses that use "remission"

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt 26:28)

"Remission" is the Greek word "aphesis" (G859) which is translated:

AV-remission 9, forgiveness 6, deliverance 1, liberty 1; 17

It is a noun coming from the verb "aphiemi" (G863) used for **forgiveness** as **received** by the sinner.

This is where understanding the original words translated as "forgiveness" is important. If you remember or have read the link above, you will know that forgiveness is a transaction involving two parties; it is both given by one (the forgiver) and received by the other (the forgivee).

When God is **granting** forgiveness, the word is **charizomai**:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake **hath forgiven you**." (Eph 4:31-32)

Paul is saying that God has already forgiven (charizomai, G5483) the Ephesians who are obviously still quite involved in sin - verse 31.

When we are **receiving** forgiveness, the word is **aphiemi**:

"If we confess our sins, [then] he is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Receiving forgiveness (aphiemi G863) is conditional on recognizing our condition and accepting that God is forgiving. Remission of sins is very much related to that process. It involves becoming kind, tenderhearted and forgiving as it says in Ephesians 4:32 and much more; even becoming Christ-like to the point where we are cured of the desire to sin.

"To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the **remission** of their sins," (Luke 1:77)

"Remission," in that verse, is from the Greek "aphesis" (G859) which is the noun form of the verb "aphiemi."

## Remission is More Than Forgiveness

Does the knowledge of salvation only result in knowing our sins are forgiven or can it do more?

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission** of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them **that obey** him." (Acts 5:32)

Is "**them that obey**" speaking merely of them that have had the record of their sins blotted out? Notice this progression:

Acts 2:38	remission of sins	shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost
Acts 5:32	to them that obey	the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given

Clearly, remission is paralleled with obedience resulting in reception of the Spirit of God.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive **remission** of sins." (Acts 10:43)

Could "through his name" refer to through His character; through having knowledge of and **trust** in His true character?

Obedience = to stop sinning = removal/remission of acts of sinning.

## No Remission Without Blood

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no **remission**." (Heb 9:22)

There is a video that helps with the meaning of that verse [here](https://characterofgod.org/hebrews-9-22-shedding-blood/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/hebrews-9-22-shedding-blood/>)

That involves a deeper study of our concept of God's **justice**. We think **blood** needs to be shed for God to **blot out** our sins. But does God need blood; does He have to kill someone or some animal before He can forgive? The amazing thing is that no, He does not need blood to forgive but we need to have **our concept of justice met** before we can receive (accept that God has granted us) forgiveness.

## More Verses on Sin Being Removed

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he **removed our transgressions** [not a record of them] from us." (Psa 103:12)

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will **subdue our iniquities**; and thou wilt **cast all their sins** [not a record of them] into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19)

"I, even I, am he that **blotteth out thy transgressions** [not a record of them] for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **cleanseth us from all sin** [He is not cleansing merely a record]." (1 John 1:7)

Each of those verses is speaking of the remission (we could say cure) of sins through God writing His law in people's hearts causing them to keep the law. It is not merely the removal of a record.

# Repentance

The definition of repentance. Repentance is something that happens in a person's mind. It can be shallow or deep; surface or heartfelt. What is Biblical repentance and where does it fit within those ranges?

**Traditional Legal Model** – Sorrow for sinful deeds done with the expectation or hope of then being free from punishment.

**Biblical Healing Model** – The sorrow a person has because of a realization of their damaged relationship with God and the sorrow they have caused Him and others. Genuine repentance would include a determination to reform behavior.

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?**” (Rom 2:4)

## Definitions of Repentance

### Modern Dictionary

**Repentance** noun

deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like. regret for any past action. (dictionary.com)

**Webster's 1828 Dictionary** (<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/>) has 3 definitions so we are going to use that to look at different levels of repentance.

### Webster's Definition of Repentance #1

"Sorrow for anything done or said; the pain or grief which a person experiences in consequence of the injury or inconvenience produced by his own conduct."

This, most-shallow level of repentance may involve little concern for others. It is mainly self-centered. I'll illustrate with a personal example (from somewhere in the range of 60 years ago.)

As a young boy (but old enough to walk by myself to the nearby visiting circus) I was attracted to the digger machine where for a nickel (5 cents) one could control (supposedly) a small crane to pick up wrapped candies or much better prizes. I went through a handful of nickels and got basically nothing for it. I remember being quite upset about it and sorry for the loss resulting from my behavior. The repentance (if you could call it that) was pretty shallow and did not involve any moral conviction.

That would match Webster's first definition of repentance – sorrow for my own conduct but not involving anyone else.



**That could have been me**

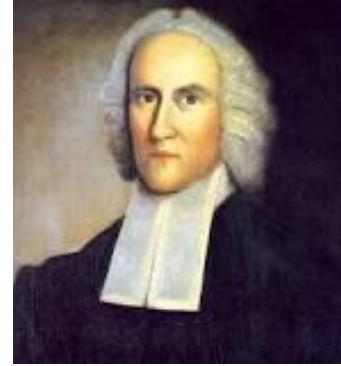
## Webster's Definition of Repentance #2

"In theology, the pain, regret or affliction which a person feels on account of his past conduct, because it **exposes him to punishment**. This sorrow proceeding merely from the fear of punishment, is called **legal repentance** ... and it may exist without an amendment of life."

That level of repentance corresponds to the **Traditional Legal Model** of the gospel. The repentance is motivated by the **fear of punishment** and the hope is that there would be a legal exoneration and a freeing from punishment by a very legal God Who makes sure every sin is punished. Such repentance might have been prompted by preachers such as the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Jonathan Edwards who said in a famous sermon:



“The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours.” (Jonathan Edwards, 1741 sermon)



What is the expectation of a repenting person who has that understanding? What changes in the person’s mind with that kind of repentance? Is it simply relief that they are not condemned to a horrible punishment?

I remember, again as a young boy having been raised in the Catholic faith, going regularly to confession and giving a list of sins and being given prayers to pray as penance. There was never a change in behavior or closeness to God as a result. How does that kind of repentance relate to this image?

It was only sorrow for **the mess on the floor** – the sinful acts and that sorrow was because of actual or potential personal loss. Perhaps it was a deeper repentance than in the first level mentioned earlier because, in some cases, there was some hurt to others.

Does that level of repentance change what’s upstream in the diagram? Barely, as the same sins would continue. Repenting of outward acts – the sins on the floor -does not solve the real problem which is the condition of the heart.



That level of repentance might motivate a person to attempt to minimize future losses, embarrassment etc by avoiding the action but there is no real change in the character.

## Webster’s Definition of Repentance #2

“Real penitence; sorrow or **deep** contrition for sin, as an offense and dishonor to God, a **violation of his holy law** ... This is called **evangelical repentance**, and is accompanied and followed by an amendment of life.”

Deeper repentance involves a spiritual component and a different motivation:

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?**” (Rom 2:4)

God was so good that He did what? Most people will think of this:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

That level of repentance still includes sorrow for the acts of sin but also involves a realization of the cost to God. It also brings a realization of the condition of the heart which is the source of the action.

“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for **out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.**” (Matt 12:34)

The heart is represented by **the overflowing sink** in the diagram. If the heart is not changed there will be no real change in the life and, especially under difficult circumstances, the condition of the heart (the sinful flesh) will be revealed.



At this level of repentance, many are thinking that God punished His Son instead of them in order to meet His legal requirements. This level of repentance still focuses on the broken law and God’s justice. It still reflects the **Traditional Legal Model**.

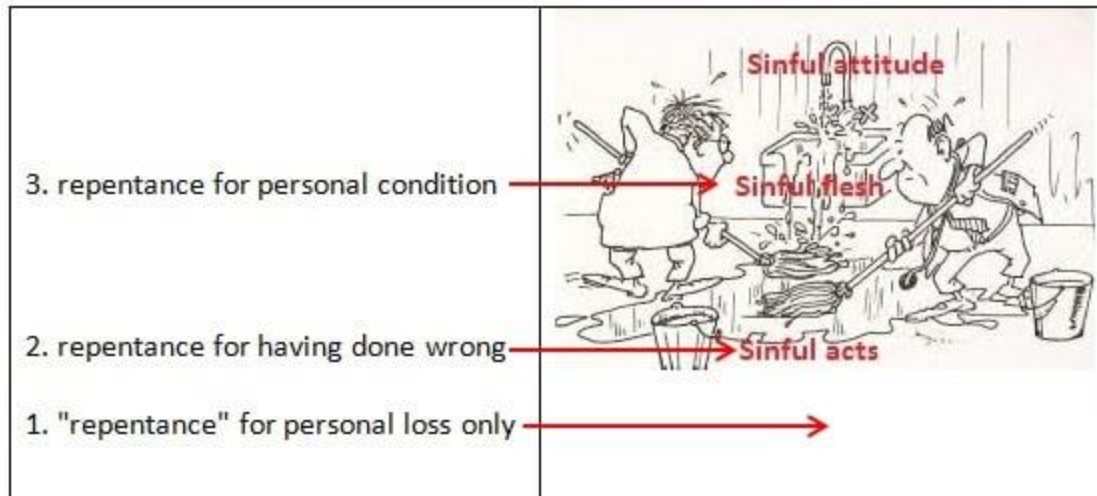
Webster’s third definition included mention of an “amendment of the life.” While efforts may be made, they can only have so much effect:

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jer 13:23)

That level of repentance still does not have the power to truly change the life.

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Level of Repentance – Cleansing the Sanctuary

We have looked at repentance on three levels corresponding to the three definitions of repentance in Webster’s dictionary:



We are moving upstream towards the source of the problem.

We can go deeper yet and repent of our attitude towards God; repent for believing wrongly about God and for negative feelings towards Him which we may not even be aware of. You might react to this saying: "But that's not my fault – I had wrong information." You did and the world and even the majority of Christians still do.

However, many never get the right information because they:

- neglect to investigate
- lack personal responsibility
- have a closed mind
- find it easier to go with the flow
- like the Traditional Legal Model concept of God because it reflects their concept of justice
- like that the traditional understanding allows them to feel anger towards others, judge others etc.

In level 3, we identified a desire to change and the inability to change ourselves. Is there any way to get God to just change our hearts for us? There is such a promise in scripture:

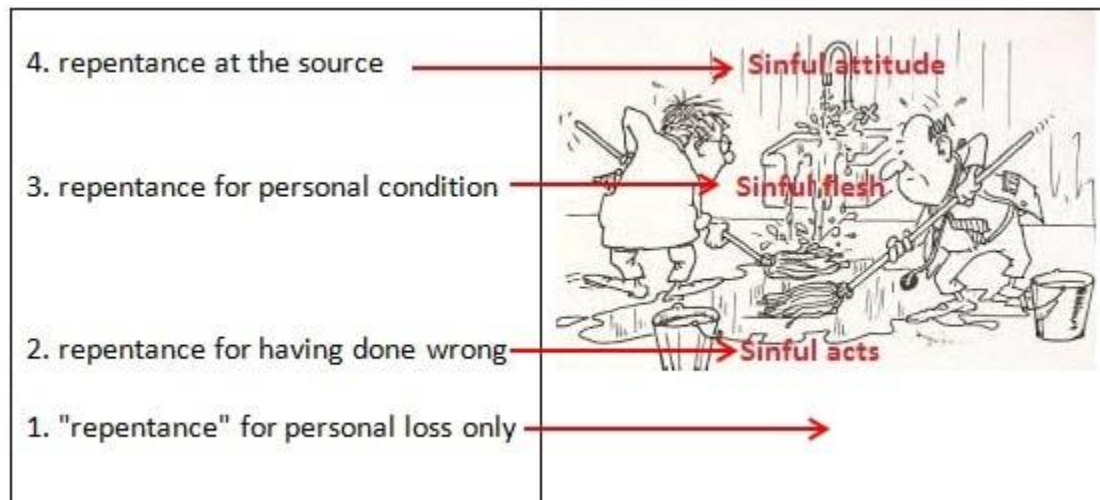
"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Eze 36:26)

However, He will not do that without our permission and cooperation. He will not just change our hearts, our thinking because He wants to. We know that God wants all to be saved; that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9) but many reject His efforts to change them. He has provided the means of change which involves our free-will cooperation:

"But we all, with open face **beholding** as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

We need to behold; to focus on His character ([glory](#)); to study especially the life of Christ Who came to show us the Father. Do that and the change will happen.

Put into your mind the truth about what God is like and your mind and heart will be changed (you become like that upon which you focus). Your attitude towards God will change and that will produce a change in the inward man and in the outward actions.



God is not concerned so much about acts of sin. He wants to go to the source of the problem and fix what is broken. He is not going to punish us for our sins or our faults. He is trying to save us from the pain we are bringing on ourselves.

"And **this is life eternal, that they might know thee** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

# Righteousness

Righteousness can be challenging to understand and there are a wide variety of thoughts on it as reflected in one of this site's contributors:

"This is **one of the most misunderstood and vague terms in all of religion**. It is usually thought of as related to **“good” behavior** or treating people right. That idea is rooted largely in the narrow **legal view** of religion from purely an external and intellectual perspective.

The true understanding of righteousness is best perceived in the character of God Himself. Jesus said that only God was righteous. Righteousness is what God is and encompasses all that God's character exhibits. Righteousness is wholeness, rightness, goodness, fairness and everything associated with those things. It is a description of an internal condition with external symptoms flowing from that condition." - **Floyd Philips** (<http://clayfootsteps.blogspot.com/2006/01/dictionary-of-religious-word-and-terms.html>)

**Traditional Legal Model** - righteousness can be thought of in terms of behavior, reflecting Paul's understanding as a Pharisee:

"Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Phil 3:6)

**Biblical Healing Model** - righteousness is about the state of the heart and relationship with God which is reflected in moral behavior and righteous acts.

## Righteousness Definitions

### **Righteousness (noun)**

the quality or state of being righteous.  
righteous conduct.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

### **Righteous (adjective)**

characterized by uprightness or morality: a righteous observance of the law.  
([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

### **Righteousness (noun)**

**1.** Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. *Righteousness*, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and

conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com>)

The modern dictionary.com emphasizes the behavior for both the noun and adjective forms. Webster's dictionary comes closer to the Biblical meaning by considering the state of the heart.

"Gracious *is* the LORD, and **righteous**; yea, our God *is* merciful."  
(Psa 116:5)

## Our Righteousness

Our righteousness in contrast to God's:

"But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isa 64:6)

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

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth **no good thing**: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not." (Rom 7:18)

Our righteousnesses are our attempts to make ourselves righteous by our own actions.

"For they [the people of Israel] being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted themselves unto **the righteousness of God**." (Rom 10:3)

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of **the knowledge of Christ Jesus** my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness**, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:" (Phil 3:8-9)

When Romans 3:10 says "there is none righteous" it must mean that no one is **inherently righteous**, none are righteous **on their own, of themselves** since the Bible actually calls some righteous:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they **were both righteous** before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:5-6)

"By faith **Abel** offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Heb 11:4)

We read "all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags." But what about these verses?:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."  
(Eph 2:10)

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all **good works**." (2 Tim 3:17)

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of **good works**." (Titus 2:14)

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to **good works**." (Heb 10:24)

Good works are good and necessary; we'll even be rewarded for them. They just don't count in establishing us in right relationship to God (righteousness). In fact, depending on our own works is a big negative (Romans 10:3, above).

## Abraham's Righteousness

Abraham is a good case study to help understand righteousness:

"For if Abraham were **justified** by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for **righteousness**.) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but **believeth** on him that **justifieth** the ungodly, his **faith** is counted for **righteousness**." (Rom 4:2-5)

Does that imply that Abraham was not justified by works? Let's look more closely at that passage (added clarifications underlined):

- "For if Abraham were justified by works, = set right with God by works
- he hath whereof to glory; = has something to boast or be proud of
- but not before God = works don't count (directly, towards salvation) with God
- 3 For or because what saith the scripture?
- It says: Abraham believed God, = believed and trusted God's word



- and it his belief was counted unto him for righteousness. = He was right with God through his belief, not through his works
- 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. As in a works-based: "I worked for that; now you owe me."
- 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth = trusts, commits to
- on him that justifieth the ungodly, = God Who justifies
- his faith is counted for righteousness. = His belief and trust in God put him in right relationship with God  
(Rom 4:2-5)

"Counted unto him for righteousness" is the recognition of actually **being** righteous. God does not declare someone to be something they are not.

So, if Abraham was righteous because of his faith and not because of his works, that is an indication that works do not determine righteousness (though they are a product of it).

## A Contradiction?

BUT then we have this passage:

"Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and **by works was faith made perfect**? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot **justified by works**, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:21-26)

Does that sound like a contradiction? Abraham's "faith" or trust, shown by his actions, **gave evidence** that he was righteous. It is not about works. James 2:21 said: "... justified **by** (G1537) works ..." which could imply that it was performing the works that justified him or made him righteous. However, "by" does not seem to be a good translation of the original word.

### G1537 ἐκ ek ek or ἐξ ex ex

a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative; prep;

AV-of 366, from 181, out of 162, by 55, on 34, with 25, misc 98; 921

1) out of, from, by, **away from**

The Remedy New Testament helps make clear how Abraham's works were related to him being righteous:



"You ineffectual people! Must you be shown that trust in a remedy without **applying it** is useless? Don't you understand that our forefather Abraham was **put right with God when his trust was applied** in offering Isaac on the altar?" (James 2:20-21, The Remedy New Testament)

"If Abraham was somehow healed by **his own efforts at keeping a set of rules** or performing certain rituals, then he would have his own healing formula to promote, and would not need trust in God. But what does the Scripture say? "Abraham **trusted** God, and **his trust was recognized as righteousness** because the distrust caused through Satan's lies had been removed, and through trust he was endowed with a new heart, right motives and Christlike principles." (Rom 4:2-3, The Remedy New Testament)

Abraham did what God requested and it worked out for Abraham - no loss of his dear son. Applying the degree of trust he had in God in being willing to sacrifice his son led to a yet deeper level of trust.

"In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute **considered righteous for what she did** when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?" (James 2:25, NIV)

## Who is Righteous?

How do we resolve "none righteous" with statements of people who were righteous?

"As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one: There is **none that understandeth**, there is **none that seeketh after God**." (Rom 3:10-11)

Paul was quoting from the Psalms and we must take into account the context of the source he was quoting:

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon **the children of men**, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up **my people** as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD." (Psa 14:2-4)

Notice who God was looking upon: "the children of men" as opposed to "my people." He looked upon the children of men and found none that did understand or seek after God. While "the children of men" did not have understanding, the same was not true of "my people."

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath **given us an understanding**, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

(1 John 5:20)

The carnal mind cannot be righteous:

"Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom 8:7)

But there is a solution:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" (Phil 2:5)

The carnal mind is equivalent to living in the flesh:

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom 8:8)

Again, there is a solution (to live in the Spirit and not in the flesh) and a clear distinction between the righteous ("if Christ *be* in you") and the unrighteous ("if any man have not the Spirit of Christ"):

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now **if any man have not the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his. And **if Christ *be* in you**, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness." (Rom 8:9-10)

Christ **giving us His righteousness** is not simply a transaction in a record; it is transforming us so that we are righteous like He is righteous.

## How We Become Righteous

Here is a quotation from one commentary on the life of Christ, to which I have added comments (in red), that helps to explain how we become righteous.

"The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man [in his unregenerate state] has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law [the heart is desperately wicked]. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These [a holy life and perfect character] He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission [healing of] of sins that are past [the sinful habits and tendencies that they once had are gone], through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God [those attributes are actually put, with men's permission, within their characters, not merely on their records]. He builds up the human character after the similitude [likeness] of the divine character [man's character becomes like God's], a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very

righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer [the believer keeps the law] in Christ. God can 'be just [it is the right thing to do], and the justifier [lines man's character up to the standard] of him which believeth in Jesus.' Rom. 3:26." (The Desire of Ages p762)

Some key points to remember:

- Righteousness is right relationship with God and other people before it is correct behavior.
- Righteousness is NOT the result of correct behavior. Correct behavior is the result of righteousness.

The following diagram, used in several places on this website, helps to illustrate:

The source of the problem is represented by the faucet continually putting water into the sink (our fleshly mind) such that it is spilling (outward and visible acts of sin) onto the floor. The mess will never be cleaned up until the source of the problem is dealt with. Our understanding of God, of His character, our attitude and therefore trust of Him all need to be changed.



"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

Jeff Benner of [www.ancient-hebrew.org](http://www.ancient-hebrew.org) has a good [explanation of righteousness](http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/definition/righteous.htm) (<https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/definition/righteous.htm>) based on the ancient Hebrew. In it he says:

"A righteous person is not one who lives a religiously pious life, the common interpretation of this word, he is one who follows the correct path, the path (way) of God."

# Sacrifices, Sacrificial System

**Traditional Legal Model** - a just God, to satisfy His justice and appease His wrath against sinners, must punish every sin before it can be forgiven. Because God loves the sinner, He appointed that sacrifices, ultimately, that of His Son, could pay the penalty in man's behalf.

**Biblical Healing Model** - God freely forgives every sin without the need for sacrifices. The sacrifices were to satisfy our understanding of justice so that we could accept even the possibility of being forgiven. They were also to show that sin caused death and to point to the Savior.

An **ever-merciful** God of love would not require payment by sacrifice to forgive. To forgive, by definition, implies no strings attached. A bank cannot both collect and forgive a debt. Let's investigate the origin of the idea that sacrifices are needed for forgiveness. This study does not go into detail about the various offerings) of the sacrificial system, but deals with the reasons behind that system and why it was needed.

## The Wages of Sin Misunderstood

As with so much of our understanding of the character of God, **the nature of His law** is very important to understand correctly. Here is the first law given to man:

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

The plainest meaning of that verse (in the KJV) is that in the same day Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they would die. Of course, they did not die that day. Since God does not lie, what is the solution to that apparent discrepancy?

The KJV margin for "thou shalt surely die" reads "dying thou shalt die" reflecting the meaning of the original Hebrew.

The "thou shalt surely die" was not predicting an immediate, **imposed event** but, rather, indicating a process or **natural consequence** - they would be subject to death and, indeed, they did die although it was hundreds of years later (Gen 5:5). They would begin to die because they no longer had the gift of eternal life. How did they lose that gift?

"**He that hath the Son hath life; and** he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:12)

That must be referring to eternal life as everyone alive has (temporal) life. To have the Son means to have a relationship with Him; to trust in Him. By their actions, it seems Adam and Eve trusted more in the words of the serpent than in the words of God. In fact, what had transpired would have resulted in distrust of God leading them to fear.

## Why be Afraid?

"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself." (Gen 3:9-10)

What was Adam afraid of? It is interesting how God responded:

"And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen 3:11)

Notice that God did not accuse them. Rather, He asked them (it would have been interesting to hear His tone of voice) giving them opportunity to respond with either admission or denial.

Adam could have answered (to an **ever-merciful** God) "yes I did and I am sorry, please forgive me". Wouldn't God have forgiven them? Yes), but how did Adam answer?

## Casting Blame

"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:12)

While he could not deny the act, this was a denial of responsibility. Adam was "passing the buck," blaming Eve for the transgression. Why would he do that?

The possibilities for the fulfilment of "thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17) were only that death would come as a natural consequence of eating the fruit, or that it would be imposed by God. They had both survived eating the fruit and the fact that they hid from God indicates where they thought the death would come from.

Imagine a situation where children are playing ball in the back yard and a window gets broken. Mother comes out the back door and asks "Who did it?" The guilty child points to another child and says "he did it." The guilty one would do that in order to escape punishment.

In Adam's mind, perhaps he expected the sentence of death to come from the hand of God. Could his reference to "the woman" (Adam did not say "my dear wife") be a way of saying it was her fault? The implication was that if anyone was to be punished it should be her. Here we have the first mention of the concept of substitution or vicarious atonement.

## Concepts of Justice

At that point, Adam's concept of God's justice system was that the sinner needed to die for having sinned. Was he right? What were the two possibilities according to what God had said?

- That Adam would die that day as a consequence of something physically deadly in the fruit.
- That Adam would die that day by an imposed act of God.

We know that Adam did not die that day at all. In fact, he lived for nearly a thousand more years. Obviously, there was nothing inherently deadly in the fruit (Gen 3:6). Here is a clue:

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

By that measure of a day, Adam did die in the day he ate. Yet he lived for centuries and eventually died of old age, not by an imposed act of God.

So, if Adam thought he could "pass the buck" (transfer the responsibility) wouldn't he have understood that the punishment could also be transferred? That another could be punished in place of the offender?

Scripture speaks against this idea of such a transfer:

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Eze 18:20)

If Adam thought that justice required the payment of a penalty for sin and that a substitute could pay the penalty for his sin (remember, he cast the blame on Eve), can you see a possible reason for God giving animal sacrifices?

## Could God Simply Forgive?

Couldn't God have just forgiven them? Many would say "no" because of their concept of justice but **God's justice** is not the same as man's. God's justice is to do the just or right thing; in such a case as this to heal and restore.

That Adam had a hard time just accepting forgiveness or that God could just forgive is reflected in Adam's own son. After killing his brother Abel:

"... Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear." (Gen 4:13)

The King James Version marginal reading for that verse says:

"Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven."

This indicates that, in Cain's thinking, God could not forgive him. It is a curious thing that Cain, likely knowing from Adam the concept that the wages of sin is death, should then say "... it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me" (Gen 4:14) and yet God took action to protect him from death:

"... the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." (Gen 4:15)

Consistent with His ever-merciful character, God forgave; the problem was that neither Adam (at least not initially), nor Cain (ever) received the forgiveness, Remember, **forgiveness involves two parties.**

So, the question really comes down to: did God want or need sacrifices at all?

"Sacrifice and offering **thou didst not desire**; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering **hast thou not required.**" (Psa 40:6)

The Bible says "no" in quite [a number of places](https://characterofgod.org/sacrifices-not-desired/). (https://characterofgod.org/sacrifices-not-desired/) God gave them including that first animal sacrifice in Eden not because He needed or required sacrifices but because mankind needed them to satisfy His understanding of justice.

## The Sacrifices of God

What "sacrifices" does God want?

"The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Psa 51:17)

That seems to indicate a humble and repentant spirit.

## Sanctification

What is sanctification? Is it even required of me? Why would I want it? Sanctification has been described as both being set apart for a holy use and as becoming holy, more God-like. A major difference between the two gospel models is how the sanctification process works and how God regards us through the process.

**Traditional Legal Model** - Sanctification is a process whereby people overcome sins in their lives thus making them more acceptable to God.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Sanctification is the process of beholding and appreciating God's true character and love for us with the effect of separating us from sin thus becoming temples for God's Indwelling Spirit.

Understanding sanctification is especially important because we tend to think that what God thinks of us is very dependent on our degree of sanctification - our holiness, our obedience, our behavior. And that gets touchy as it affects us directly.

What is sanctification? We tend to think that God demands sanctification (perfect behavior) and that He won't love us unless we are holy. However, if we can base our feelings of self-worth on what He thinks of us rather than on our behavior, we will be more likely to want to obey which puts us on the road to true sanctification.

Before we get into sanctification, let's look at what God says about His attitude towards us:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did **predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom 8:28-29)

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy** and without blame before him in love: Having **predestinated us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," (Eph 1:4-5)

"For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **Who will have all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim 2:3-4)

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8:38-39)



A good resource to help put our value in God's eyes into perspective is the book **Identity Wars** which can be requested [here](https://characterofgod.org/resources#identity-wars). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#identity-wars>)

## What does Sanctification Mean?

"Sanctification" can mean "**set apart**;" often "**set apart for holy use**" perhaps more so in the Old Testament, especially regarding many articles associated with the sanctuary services but also of people.

"**Sanctify** (H6942) unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine." (Exo 13:2)

"That thou shalt **set apart** (H5674) unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall be* the LORD'S." (Exo 13:12)

Clearly, "sanctify," in Exodus 13:2, is not to make holy. Here is an interesting New Testament use:

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but **ye are sanctified**, but **ye are justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:11)

It is interesting because following verses show that the Corinthians were anything but holy:

"**I speak to your shame**. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore **there is utterly a fault among you**, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to be* defrauded? Nay, **ye do wrong**, and defraud, and that *your* brethren." (1 Cor 6:5-8)

So, what does "**ye are sanctified**" mean in verse 11? The verse says they were both sanctified and justified, the two processes seeming to go together.

Being **justified** does not simply make a person holy as the Corinthians certainly were not. It is, first of all, about putting us right (in our relationship to Him); not sinning (completed sanctification) will be the natural fruit (taking time to develop) of that relationship. So, in reference to the Corinthians, it must also be in terms of being set apart or of being engaged in a process.

So how do we become sanctified, what is the process? Here is one idea:

"But most of the time when Christians use the word *sanctification*, they are referring to the progressive **work of God** to make a believer more like Jesus Christ."  
(<https://www.christianity.com/jesus/following-jesus/repentance-faith-and-salvation/what-does-sanctification-mean.html>, emphasis added)

Many answers to "what is sanctification?" will emphasize it as God's doing. This is true in that God has taken the initiative and we cannot become holy without His input. However, God does not make such a change in us without our cooperation and consent at every step. It is a process which requires our permission (God will never override our free will) and our desire for something better. That desire comes from seeing and appreciating His character as revealed through Jesus Christ.

"But we all, with open face beholding as **in a glass the glory** of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

The **glory** of the Lord is essentially His character. As we behold His character it changes us. The beholding, for us living long after Jesus' life on earth, happens through His word:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17)

Sanctifying can be equated with cleansing (in a moral sense).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves** from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor 7:1)

Here is a quote from a book on the life of Christ that shows how this process works:

"All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart-work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying our own impulses. The will, refined and **sanctified**, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be **a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ**, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us." (The Desire of Ages, p668, emphasis added)

"And the very God of peace **sanctify you wholly**; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 5:23)

For more detail see the series of studies on this site on [the cleansing of the sanctuary](https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/) (our mind) (<https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/>) That series shows how the verse above indicates the subconscious as well as the conscience mind. One cannot be wholly sanctified while the subconscious mind is holding wrong concepts of God's

character. We become like what we behold or, more correctly, what we comprehend in our minds. The point of this website is to show that God is not an **accuser**, He does not **judge**, **condemn**, **punish**, **take vengeance**, **destroy** or **kill**.

When such terms are correctly defined (as they apply to God) and understood, God is seen to be only love. Even the subconscious mind can then be cleansed so that a person is wholly sanctified.

Cleansing or sanctifying ourselves is a goal because of this promise:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath **given to them that obey him.**" (Acts 5:32)

Ultimately, sanctification is a process with the goal of making people suitable sanctuaries or temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor 3:16)

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor 6:16)

# Sanctuary

**Note:** “sanctuary” can have a few meanings. The sanctuary this page is most concerned with is that most often referred to as the heavenly sanctuary that is to be cleansed as in Daniel 8:14 “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

**Traditional Legal Model** – The sanctuary is heaven or a part thereof where Jesus, in some understandings, carries on the legal aspect of the work of salvation by cleansing the **heavenly books** of the record of people’s confessed sins. This work was prefigured by the earthly sanctuary built by Moses in which the people were “cleansed” by the application of sacrificial blood – but only typically: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” (Heb 10:4)

**Biblical Healing Model** – While Jesus, in human form, is physically in the heavenly sanctuary, through His omnipresent spirit, He aids each of us as we cooperate with Him in the process of cleansing the sanctuary heaven is most concerned with – the minds of His people on earth.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Sanctuary (noun)

- a sacred or holy place.
- Judaism.
  - the Biblical tabernacle or the Temple in Jerusalem.
  - the holy of holies of these places of worship.
- an especially holy place in a temple or church.
- a church or other sacred place where fugitives were formerly entitled to immunity from arrest
- any place of refuge; asylum.
- a tract of land where birds and wildlife, especially those hunted for sport, can breed and take refuge in safety from hunters.

([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Nov. 5, 2019)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### Sanctuary (noun)

- A sacred place; particularly among the Israelites, the most retired part of the temple at Jerusalem, called the Holy of Holies, in which was kept the ark of the covenant, and into which no person was permitted to enter except the high priest, and that only once a year to intercede for the people. The same name was given to the most sacred part of the tabernacle. Leviticus 4:6. Hebrews 9:1.
- The temple at Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 20:8.

- A house consecrated to the worship of God; a place where divine service is performed. Psalms 73:17. Hence sanctuary is used for a church.
- A place of protection; a sacred asylum. Hence a sanctuary-man is one that resorts to a sanctuary for protection.
- Shelter; protection.  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/sanctuary>, accessed Nov. 5, 2019)

## Sanctuary Definition – Synonyms

Let's establish that the terms sanctuary, tabernacle and temple are all somewhat synonymous. There are a number of verses that seem to make these equivalent terms:

"And they [the Levites] shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the **tabernacle**: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the **sanctuary** and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die." (Num 18:3)

"Afterward he brought me to the **temple**, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, *which was* the breadth of the **tabernacle**." (Eze 41:1)

"The posts of the **temple** were squared, and the face of the **sanctuary**; the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other." Eze 41:21)

"A minister of the **sanctuary**, and of the true **tabernacle**, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb 8:2)

"For there was a **tabernacle** made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the **sanctuary**." (Heb 9:2)

The words "house" and "habitation" are also, at times, used with a meaning like the other terms:

"Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the **temple** of the **house** of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them." (Dan 5:3)

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy **temple** in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for **an habitation of God** through the Spirit." (Eph 2:21-22)

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By

faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, **dwelling in tabernacles** with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:" (Heb 11:8-9)

It says Abraham lived in "tabernacles" but, of course, we would call that a tent. The original Greek word is "skene" (Strong's G4633) which can mean a tent.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three **tabernacles** (G4633); one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Matt 17:4)

Peter would have been proposing to make tents, not something as elaborate as the tabernacle Moses had built, certainly not a place for sacrifice. Matthew used the same word and it is used again in Acts to refer to what Moses had built:

"Our fathers had the tabernacle (G4633) of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen." (Acts 7:44)

## Sanctuary Definition – A Safe and Holy Place

So we have the somewhat similar terms: dwelling, habitation, house, sanctuary, tabernacle, temple, tent. The most significant term (and the one we are focusing on) is "sanctuary." The other terms all have the meaning of a place to live or to house something. A sanctuary is that and more. It implies the idea of a place of safety and security, as given in the dictionary definitions above.

It also implies a place of holiness as the word sanctuary is from the Hebrew word "miqdash" (Strong's H4720) which is related to the Hebrew verb "qodesh" (Strong's H6944) as used in "holy habitation" (Deut 26:15, quoted below).

"The word 'sanctuary' signifies 'holy place,' and every abiding place of God is necessarily holy. The sanctuary of God is therefore His dwelling-place." (E.J. Waggoner, The Everlasting Covenant, p367)

The quotation above suggests that any sanctuary or place God is to abide must be holy. This corresponds with verses describing God's habitation as holy as in:

"Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey." (Deut 26:15)

The word “holy,” in that verse, is a translation from the Hebrew word “qodesh” (H6944) which is based upon the Hebrew verb “qadash” (H6942) meaning to sanctify. It is interesting that the word “sanctuary” as in this verse:

“Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my **sanctuary**: I *am* the LORD.” (lev 19:30)

which is the Hebrew word miqdash” (H4720) is also from the word qadash. As “sanctuary” is based on a word meaning to sanctify or make holy, it makes sense that a sanctuary is to be a holy place.

Thus, the need for cleansing the sanctuary for God’s abiding presence. Here are verses connecting God’s abiding place to the human sanctuary:

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and **I in him**, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that **he abideth in us**, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” (1 John 3:24)

Further studies on other options for the meaning of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 will show that the best option is the human heart. See a detailed study on [The Cleansing of the Sanctuary](https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/daniel-814-the-cleansing-of-the-sanctuary/>)

# Sealed

Revelation 7:3 Sealed? What does Biblical sealing mean? How does that relate to being saved? Do you have to be sealed to be saved? Is the sealing only for a special purpose?

**Traditional Legal Model** - Those sealed are distinguished as being in a special relationship to God – more consecrated, devoted to His service, protected etc and sometimes as having their salvation secured.

**Biblical Healing Model** - All the above may be true but people can also be sealed in terms of having characters ripe for harvest, fully reflecting the character of Christ.

The sealing is commonly seen as fitting into last-day events. Here is a passage giving an indication of where the sealing fits:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another **angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God**: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have **sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**” (Rev 7:1-3)

Just after this is the account of the end-time trumpets of Revelation chapter 8.

## Revelation 7:3 What is a Seal?

A seal, as it has commonly been used through history, is a device such as a signet ring or stamp that is used to authenticate a document. It includes:

- The name of the person
- The office or title of that person
- The territory involved

<b>Name</b>	<b>George Washington</b>	<b>Yahweh</b>
Official Position	President	Creator
Jurisdiction	United States	Heaven and earth

Note that God’s seal appears in the Sabbath commandment (Exo 20:11)

A seal can be an indicator of ownership or quality. Seals were also used to prevent tampering with manuscripts or items:



“Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and **seal** it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and **sealed** with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.” (Esther 8:8)

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and **sealed** till the time of the end.” (Dan12:9)

“So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, **sealing** the stone, and setting a watch.” (Matt 27:66)

Adam Clarke’s commentary brings out another meaning:

“By *sealing* we are to understand *consecrating* the persons in a more especial manner to God, and showing, by this mark of God upon them, that they were under his more immediate protection, and that nothing should hurt them.” (Adam Clarke Commentary on Rev 7:3)

That comment suggests a select group in a special relationship to God.

## Revelation 7:3 Who Gets Sealed?

“And he [Abraham] received the **sign** of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:” (Rom 4:11)

Sign and seal have similar meanings and being sealed is connected to faith.

We get more information about the sealed ones mentioned in Revelation 7 from later in Revelation:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having **his Father’s name written in their foreheads**. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed **from among men, being the firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are **without fault** before the throne of God.” (Rev 14:1-5)

Being described as “the firstfruits” implies they are ripe and ready for the harvest. The righteous are sealed with the Father's name (Rev 14:1). “**Name**” represents character as in “He has a good name.” The suggestion is that God’s character is revealed in their lives. The sealing then could indicate a people who are settled in their relationship with God and having characters that reflect that of Christ.

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Eph 4:30)

## How do the 144,000 Sealed Servants Serve?

The 144,000 are servants (Rev 7:3) because they serve God by doing His will to achieve a particular purpose as did Jesus:

“Jesus saith unto them, **My meat** is to do the will of him that sent me, and to **finish his work**.” (John 4:34)

Jesus’ meat or work or purpose in life was to do this Father’s will which was to bring **glory** to His Father by revealing His character:

“**I have glorified thee** on the earth: **I have finished the work** which thou gavest me to do. ... **I have manifested thy name** unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” (John 17:4,6)

Jesus was sealed:

“Labour not for the **meat** which perisheth, but for that **meat which endureth unto everlasting life**, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.” (John 6:27)

“As thou hast sent me into the world [to do this work], even so [for the same purpose] have I also sent them into the world [to do the same work].” (John 17:18)

Here is a significant statement connecting the work of God’s servants (“the children of God”) with the work of Christ and putting it into an end-time context:

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of **His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted**. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. **His character is to be made known**. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth. ... Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the

world, is a revelation of His character of love. **The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p415-16)**

With glory, character and name associated as they are, it makes sense that the 144,000 are sealed as Jesus was, to do the work He did – to reveal in themselves the Father’s character to others.

That experience is described (Rev 7:3) as being in the forehead as that is where character resides (in the mind).

## Second Death

The Second Death is just that - a death. Many mistake it to be an ongoing (even eternal) existence, in something other than our present bodily form.

**Traditional Legal Model** - God's final physical punishment (death) by fire of the lost from which there is no resurrection. In some understandings, the fire goes on forever.

**Biblical Healing Model** - The death from which there is no resurrection where the lost are fully separated from God, Who is the only Source of life. They do this because their misconceptions of Him do not allow them to believe that He is, in fact, ever-merciful.

There is a lot of misunderstanding about the Second Death. An example:

"... the second death is a reference to the lake of fire where those who are separated from God by their sin will dwell for eternity. This judgment was recorded in Scripture as a warning to unbelievers to seek the salvation that Jesus Christ provides."  
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/second-death.html>)

Does that sound like seek salvation or else? How can you dwell anywhere when you are dead? Punishing in fire for eternity for the decisions of a short lifetime? Those are serious problems with that understanding especially as they reflect on the character of a loving and ever-merciful God. People are not very attracted to a God Who would threaten to punish them with fire if they don't love Him.

The Second Death is mentioned just four times in scripture, all in Revelation.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the **second death**." (Rev 2:11)

Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the **second death** hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev20:6)

The first two uses tell us that the Second Death has no power over the righteous.

"Power" in the Greek has the meaning of authority, not force as in this verse showing that Jesus received that authority from His Father:

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:18)

Here is the third reference to the Lake of Fire:

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**." (Rev 20:14)

According to that verse, the Second Death is an event or an experience. The Lake of Fire is a place. Can the Second Death (an event) be the lake of fire (a place)? A place and an event are not the same thing.

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their **part** in the lake which **burneth with fire and brimstone**: which is the **second death**." (Rev 21:8)

That verse, another reference to the Lake of Fire, also equates the Lake of Fire and the Second Death. We need to look for a sense in which they can be equated.

"Part" is from the Greek word "meros" (G3313)

1) a part

1a) a part due or assigned to one

To "have their part" means to take part in something; "the lost shall have their **part** ("meros" G3313) in the lake" NOT shall have their **place** in the lake. "Meros" is used in that sense in other verses:

"Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no **part** (G3313) with me." (John 13:8)

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in **respect** (G3313) of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:" (Col 2:16)

"Blessed and holy *is* he that hath **part** in the first resurrection: on such the **second death** hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev 20:6)

## "The Lake which Burneth with Fire and Brimstone"

Can the terms "lake," "fire," and "brimstone" have non-literal meanings?

## Lake

"And I heard as it were the **voice of a great multitude**, and as the **voice of many waters**, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (Rev 19:6)

"And he saith unto me, **The waters** which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, **are peoples**, and multitudes and nations, and tongues." (Rev 17:15)



This is NOT Revelation's Lake of Fire

"Woe to the multitude of **many people**, *which* make a noise like the noise of **the seas**; and to the rushing of **nations**, *that* make a rushing like the rushing of **mighty waters**! (Isa 17:12)

Those verses use references to water to describe people.

## Fire

Fire is often not literal in scripture. See the glossary definition for "fire" (when added) for more examples. Here is a verse comparing fire to love:

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; **jealousy is cruel** as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of **fire**, which hath a **most vehement** flame." (S. Sol 8:6)

"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, **its jealousy unyielding** as the grave. It burns like blazing **fire**, like a mighty flame." (S. Sol 8:6, New International Version)

"Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death; ardent **love is as unrelenting** as Sheol. Love's flames are **fiery flames** — the fiercest of all. (S. Sol 8:6, Holman Christian Standard Bible)

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and **with fire**:" (Matt 3:11)

Those are not references to literal fire.

**"Every man's work shall be made manifest:** for the day shall declare it, because **it shall be revealed by fire**; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor 3:13)

"Every man's work shall be made manifest" to who? To others or to God (Who already knows) or to self?

What will make the spirit of that work especially evident will be the love of God activating men's consciences as in this verse:

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Romans 12:20)

## Brimstone

"Brimstone" as in "... the lake which burneth with fire and **brimstone** ..." (Rev 21:8) is a reference to the presence of God. Brimstone is from the Greek word "theion" (Strong's G2303) from the Greek word "theios" (Strong's G2304) which has the meaning of "divine" or "Godhead."

## The Lake of Fire is an Experience

The Lake of Fire can also be understood as an event or experience. Remember:

Part = to take part in or experience  
 Lake = people  
 Fire = love  
 Brimstone = presence of God

Those meanings could be compared to the verse like this:

"have their **part** in the **lake** which **burneth with fire** and **brimstone**"  
 the **experience** of **the lost** fully exposed to **God's love** and **presence**

That will heap coals of (figurative) fire on their heads much more than feeding or giving drink to an enemy.

The final result of that experience will be the eternal death of the wicked. Some verses related to that experience are:

"The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. As the whirlwind passeth, **so is the wicked no more**: but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation." (Pro 10:24-25)

"But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb 10:27)

"For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: **all they that hate me love death**." (Pro 8:35-36)

Those who do not find God perhaps because they have neglected to seek Him and finally actually reject Him are contrasted with those who find Him and thus find (eternal) life. The wicked "wrongeth his own soul" - they do it to themselves.

The lost shall be very grieved as described here:

"The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved; he shall **gnash with his teeth**, and **melt away**: the desire of the wicked shall perish." (Psa 112:10)

"The desire of the righteous *is* only good: *but* the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath." (Pro 11:23)

The wicked expect wrath (as they understand it) because that is their view of God.

See additional material on this including the meaning of to "melt away" in the e-book [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

## God Does not Cause the Second (or any) Death

"The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death." (1 Cor 15:26)

Does it make any sense that God would use death to destroy death? Death is an enemy of both God and man. What really causes death?

"**Evil shall slay the wicked**: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate." (Psa 34:21)

"For **sin pays its wage--death**; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23, Good News Translation)

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall **of the flesh reap corruption**; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal 6:8)



"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and **sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**" (James 1:15)

Eternal death is the natural result of a full and final rejection of God, the Source of life Who, being the God of love and freedom, always honors free-will choices.

## **Eternal Life is to Know God so Eternal Death is to Not Know God**

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

The not knowing God will result from a refusal to know Him; a rejection, often based on misinformation about Him.

Eternal life = knowing God

Eternal death = not knowing God

## **What is the “Fire” that Devours the Wicked?**

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Rev 20:9)

The fire of Revelation 20:9 is said to “devour” the lost, which sounds like physical destruction. But one of the definitions (Online Bible) for the original word (“katesthio” Strong’s H2719) is:

“of the consumption of the strength of body and mind **by strong emotions**”

Here are some other uses of the same word:

“And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house **hath eaten** me up.” (John 2:17)

We need to recognize that Revelation is not in strictly chronological order. Verses 9 and 10 state the final fate of both the lost and of Satan; then verse 10 starts a more-detailed description of events. It doesn't make sense that fire would devour them in verse 9 and then they are cast into a fire in verse 15 - if it was meant to be a chronological account.

The Lake of Fire (including Revelation 20:9) is not talking about physical fire. However, there are indications that there will be a cleansing of the earth and a physical fire will be involved:

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet 3:12)

That will be preparatory to the restoration of the earth:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." (Rev 21:1)

## **What About Jesus' Death?**

A question that often comes up is "did Jesus die the Second Death?" Read a study on [Jesus and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/did-jesus-die-second-death/). (https://characterofgod.org/did-jesus-die-second-death/)

## Sent

If God literally sent all the nasty things the Old Testament says He did then we have some serious contradictions regarding His character. Is there more than one way to understand "the Lord sent a pestilence"?

**Traditional Legal Model** - God, in strict justice, sent disasters of many types upon both Israel and their enemies often as punishment for their sins.

**Biblical Healing Model** - In many cases, God was said to send disasters upon people when, in reality, He was merely allowing what would come without His protection.

We are here not so concerned about the meaning of this simple word as with the reason behind the sending and whether it was an active or passive sending. It is a vitally important point because of its effect on our understanding of God's character.

If you take the Bible literally, as it reads in the English, it certainly looks like God was responsible for actively, personally sending many of the troubles that befell Israel.

Examples (I have inserted the Hebrew word for each use of "sent/send"):

"And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and **the LORD sent (nathan) thunder and hail**, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt." (Exo 9:23)

"So **the LORD sent (nathan) a pestilence** upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men." (2 Sam 24:15)

"And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they feared not the LORD: therefore **the LORD sent (shalach) lions** among them, which slew *some* of them." (2 Kings 17:25)

"And **the LORD sent (shalach) against him bands of the Chaldees**, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets." (2 Kings 24:2)

"So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken *it*." (Eze 5:17)

## Why Question that God "Sent It"?

You may have heard this popular saying:

"The Bible says it, I believe it and that settles it for me."

What is wrong with that sort of thinking? What are some reasons we might question particular statements in the Bible?

- Some literal understandings make God into a monster.
- They can contradict the most fundamental truth "God is love."
- Much of the Bible has a spiritual meaning beyond the literal.
- It is important to consider the context of the whole Bible (see [Miller's rules](https://characterofgod.org/william-millers-rules/)) (<https://characterofgod.org/william-millers-rules/>).
- They can make us fearful of God when He says not to fear.
- We tend to project our ways of thinking onto God.
- There are translation issues, changed word meanings, idioms etc that affect the meaning.
- We need to look deeper to understand the principles of the word.
- Cultural views of the time are foreign to us.

In light of all those factors, it is not unreasonable to ask "did God really send all that trouble?" In answering that question, the correct meaning of the word "sent" becomes very important.

## Original word meanings

**Nathan** H5414 (uses in KJV):

AV-**give 1078**, put 191, **deliver 174**, made 107, set 99, up 26, lay 22, grant 21, suffer 18, yield 15, bring 15, cause 13, utter 12, laid 11, **send 11**, recompense 11, appoint 10, shew 7, misc 167; 2008

Young's Concordance lists 116 different ways in which "nathan" is translated in English so there is obviously potential for a very wide variety of meaning.

**Shalach** H7971 (uses in KJV):

AV-**send 566**, go 73, (send, put, ... ) forth 54, send away 48, lay 14, send out 12, put 10, put away 7, cast out 7, stretch out 5, cast 5, set 5, put out 4, depart 4, soweth 3, loose 3, misc 22; 847

There is considerable overlap in meaning and use of these two words. Both are used:

to send **an effect** to a **person**  
and  
to send **a person** to a **place** or **on a mission**

An example of the latter is: "... Here I am, send (shalach) me" (Isa 6:8)

## Individual Verses

Carefully examining uses of the original words can help us understand that they can have more than one meaning.

"So the LORD sent [nathan] a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men." (2 Sam 24:15)

The word for sent is "nathan" which can mean to give, give up, deliver.

It could have been:

"So the LORD gave up Israel to the pestilence ...

In other words, He ceased to protect them. Notice this verse that uses both words:

"And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will **send [shalach]** the pestilence among you; **and** ye shall be **delivered [nathan]** into the hand of the enemy." (Lev 26:25)

Here "nathan" is translated "delivered." The word "and" is supplied. The verse could easily read:

I will **send** [shalach] the pestilence among you;  
ye shall be **delivered** [nathan] into the hand of the enemy.

The Hebrew parallel literary structure is equating the two parts of the sentence so that:

to send the pestilence = to deliver to the enemy

This would mean that when the pestilence comes it is because they have been handed over to the enemy. And "to deliver" can simply mean to cease to protect, to allow to go their own way as in:

"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I **gave them up** [shalach] unto **their own hearts' lust**: and they walked in **their own counsels**. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." (Psa 81:11-14)

"Gave them up" there uses the word "shalach" and is clearly permissive. They would not listen to God so He, honoring their free-will choice, let them go their own way.

Here is an interesting verse:

"And the LORD **sent** fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Num 21:6)

That is often quoted to support the idea that God actively afflicts people. But did God actually send the serpents?

"Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, **wherein were fiery serpents**, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;" (Deut 8:15)

The wilderness was already infested with the fiery serpents that God was protecting them from even as He was protecting them from the drought. So why did He send or allow or give them up to the serpents? The context gives a clue:

"And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." (Num 21:5)

God always honors man's free will. When they reject His leadership, He will not impose His presence.

Here is a verse which renders "shalach" as to "cast them away"

"If thy children have sinned against him, and he have **cast them away [shalach]** for their transgression;" (Job 8:4)

Here is a version of that renders it in the permissive sense:

"If your children sinned against him, he allowed them to suffer the consequences of their sinfulness." (Job 8:4, God's Word Translation)

Another example:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, **I will send [shalach] upon them the sword**, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. (Jer 29:17)

The same verse in the New Revised Standard Version reads:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, **I am going to let loose on them sword**, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten."  
(Jer 29:17, New Revised Standard Version)

This verse uses the word "let" which is to permit or allow something to happen:

"Therefore **deliver up [nathan]** their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and **let** their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and **let** their men be put to death; **let** their young men be slain by the sword in battle.  
(Jer 18:21)

"A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, **he will plead** with all flesh; he will **give [nathan]** them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. (Jer 25:31)

"He will plead" can be understood as God saying "please, please will you ..." When they refuse, He gives in and reluctantly says "Okay, have it your way."

## Responsibility Attributed to God

It was common in ancient near eastern cultures to attribute everything to the gods:

"Our Western minds have trouble with some of the ways that the Ancient Near Eastern cultures, from which our Bible is derived, spoke. They held the ruling deity responsible for all that happened under his reign regardless of whether or not he had anything to do with it. The Israelites adopted this same pattern of speaking and God used their cultural idioms to have His Word recorded. Thankfully, He provided us Westerners with sufficient methods for interpreting the language." ([Edwards, Troy](#), 2016, "The Lord 'Sent' It" p16)

This understanding of words translated as "sent" relates to the principle that [love takes responsibility](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/). (<https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/>) of which there are many [examples](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/) (<https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/>).

# Shame

Shame and guilt themselves aren't so different between the gospel models but how they are dealt with is.

In **the Traditional Legal Model**, the consideration would be: If there was a crime committed (no matter how long ago) justice demands that the guilty party be punished perhaps with a little shaming added for extra measure.

In **the Biblical Healing Model**, while there may have been a crime in the past, if the person has repented and is healing of that behavior, there is no need for guilt and shame.

## Shame and Guilt Definitions

### **Shame** (noun)

the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another:

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/shame>

### **Shame** (noun)

1. A painful sensation excited by a consciousness of guilt, or of having done something which injures reputation; ... *Shame* is particularly excited by the disclosure of actions which, in the view of men, are mean and degrading. Hence is it often or always manifested by a downcast look or by blushes, called ***confusion of face***.

(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/shame>)

### **Guilt** (noun)

the fact or state of having committed an offense, crime, violation, or wrong, especially against moral or penal law; culpability ...

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/guilt>

### **Guilt** (noun)

... *guilt* renders a person a debtor to the law, as it binds him to pay a penalty in money or suffering ...

(<https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/guilt>)

The Hebrew word for guilt is "asham" - from which we get the English word "ashamed" so they are closely-related terms. A consciousness of guilt leads to shame.

## Guilt and Shame Come From our Actions, Not from God

David admitted the guilt of his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah.



"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest." (Psa 51:4)

He experienced guilt and shame because of what he had done, not because God had imposed those feelings on him. The desired result is a restored relationship with God.

## Guilt is the Cause of Shame

Shame comes from the consciousness of guilt as a result of wrongdoing:

"Thou art become **guilty** ("asham" H816) in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries." (Eze 22:4)

We know what shame is but what does it do? God gave man the capacity to experience the emotion of shame just as He gave the capacity to feel pain. In both cases, they act as safeguards against further injury or emotional pain. They warn us of the results of our actions. While God designed us with those abilities, He is not the cause of us experiencing physical pain or emotional shame.

## Shame in Hebrew

Let's look at the word for shame in Hebrew. It is "asham" (spelled, right to left: aleph, shin, mem):

אשם

The root of the word is: Aysh (aleph, shin) = fire:

ש א

The word picture of these two letters- reading from right to left - aleph and shin - is that of something which is strong, and devours. This is fire. The Hebrew letter "mem" is added to produce the word for shame.

"One aspect of the Hebrew letter "mem" is chaos or turbulence rising. Another aspect is that of blood. When someone is ashamed, they feel flushed, as if they are "burning up." In fact, it is the consciousness of guilt they feel at that moment as the blood rises in the

face. This is a certain give away, as understood in the expression "shame-faced." One who is ashamed, is experiencing the '**fire of chaos**' within." (From a guest [article](#) by Paul Harnett at my other website: - <https://www.jesus-resurrection.info/difference-between-guilt-and-shame.html>)

See the booklet **The Lake of Fire and the Second Death** [ADD LINK] for an interesting connection between the words for man and woman and that for fire.

## Provision to Relieve Guilt

God gave Israel the practice of the trespass offering ("asham" H817):

"And he shall bring his **trespass offering** unto the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin." (Lev 5:6)

This was not because God needed or wanted [sacrifices](#) but because, by this ritual, the sinner could "make the payment" they understood to be required thus alleviating feelings of guilt.

Sacrifices were appointed, again not because God required them but because man needed them to assure them of God's forgiveness:

"And it shall be, when he shall be **guilty** in one of these *things*, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that *thing*: And he shall bring his **trespass offering** unto the LORD for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin." (Lev 5:5-6)

"And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done *somewhat against* any of the commandments of the LORD *concerning things* which should not be done, and are **guilty**; When the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation." (Lev 4:13:14)

This was an [accommodation](#) (<https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/>) on God's part with the purposes of:

- Causing (knowledge of) sin to abound (Rom 5:20)
- Removing guilt and shame
- Pointing to the Savior
- Satisfying our sense of justice

## Set Free from Guilt and Shame

Now, of course, we can look on the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus and, with knowledge of His self-sacrificing love, deal with those feelings. When we sin, how long do we need to feel guilty? As soon as we realize that we are forgiven we can accept the forgiveness and leave the guilt behind.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

We are made free. That making us free is equivalent to the **ransom** provided on our behalf. We can be free from fear of punishment, from condemnation and from shame.

## Guilt and Shame a Protection from Acts of Sin

As the conscience is sharpened, guilt can be activated before performing a sinful act because of the awareness that the desire to do the act is, in itself, sinful (Matt 5:28).

Guilt is not intended to make us suffer. It is to help us to turn to the One who has the solution to guilt.

## God Protects us from Shame

Feelings of guilt and shame are certainly, in a sense harmful; painful to us. God does not seek to promote or increase guilt and shame. There are a number of cases in scripture where God is seen to minimize that hurt:

**Genesis 3** - Adam was not accused but merely questioned (I can imagine in a non-condemning voice) "... Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? [implying: "It wasn't me"] Hast thou eaten ..."

**Luke 7** - Jesus wanted Simon to recognize his condition (guilt) without causing him embarrassment and shame in front of his guests.

**John 8** - Jesus did not openly expose the sins of the accusers of the woman caught in adultery.

**John 13** - Jesus could have openly exposed Judas. Instead, He treated him as one already forgiven.

# Sin

**Traditional Legal Model** – Sin is simply the act of breaking God’s rules. If He says don’t do it and you do it then that is a sin; you have sinned and you are a sinner. Breaking His rules requires the administration of a penalty to maintain God’s justice.

**Biblical Healing Model** – A sin is the act of breaking God’s “rules.” However, the rules must be understood correctly (see “**law**”) as diagnostic tools to show us our condition; our sinful nature. That sinful nature is a mind that does not trust God fully and may even be in full rebellion against Him. The word “sin” can describe any of:

- a sinful attitude – willful rebellion against God
- sinful flesh – our sinful nature
- sinful acts – symptoms of that sinful, fallen condition

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Sin (noun)

1. transgression of divine law: the sin of Adam.
2. any act regarded as such a transgression, especially a willful or deliberate violation of some religious or moral principle.
3. any reprehensible or regrettable action, behavior, lapse, etc.; great fault or offense: It’s a sin to waste time.

### Sin (verb)

4. to commit a sinful act.
  5. to offend against a principle, standard, etc.
- ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), accessed Feb. 20, 2018)

## Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### Sin (noun)

1. The voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of rectitude or duty, prescribed by God; any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command; a wicked act; iniquity. *sin* is either a positive act in which a known divine law is violated, or it is the voluntary neglect to obey a positive divine command, or a rule of duty clearly implied in such command. *sin* comprehends not action only, but neglect of known duty, all evil thoughts purposes, words and desires, whatever is contrary to God’s commands or law.

### Sin (verb, intransitive)

1. To depart voluntarily from the path of duty prescribed by God to man; to violate the divine law in any particular, by actual transgression or by the neglect or non-observance

of its injunctions; to violate any known rule of duty.  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/sin>)

## So Many Words for Sin

“Sin,” as used in scripture, becomes difficult to understand for two major reasons.

1. Because there are many different words involved in the original languages. Think of how many words in our English translations are used for sin within the King James Version:

corruption, crime, darkness, disobedience, error, evil, fault, iniquity, lawlessness, offense, sin, sinfulness, transgression, trespass, ungodliness, unrighteousness, wickedness, wrong

There are phrases like “desires of the flesh” and probably other words I have missed as well as those describing specific sins – lust, murder, stealing etc.

2. The great emphasis on the deed. Notice, in the dictionary definitions above, how the deed is emphasized. There was no mention of “sin” as sinful flesh or as a mind in rebellion, yet scripture often uses it this way.

If you think about it, it is logical that the sin, which scripture says originated with Satan, would have – very early on – involved distrust of God.

“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” (Eze 28:15)

There was something out of harmony with God in Satan’s mind before he committed any outward sin. Likewise, Eve would have had to distrust God’s word before she took the forbidden fruit.

## Acts vs Attitude

To keep this study from becoming too long, not every original word for sin will be closely examined. It will focus on the important distinction between sin as an action that violates rules and sin as the underlying condition or attitude that causes us to so easily commit the acts. In Romans chapter 5 Paul really emphasizes this distinction.

He uses mostly two Greek words for what most people would just classify as sins:

“Hamartia” (Strong’s G266) which is normally understood as “to miss the mark” or “to not measure up.”

“Paraptoma” (Strong’s G3900) which is understood as individual acts of sin and which the KJV renders as “offences.”

Here is verse 12 from Romans 5 with some questions inserted just to bring up the issues:

**“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered** - An act enters? Was Adam and Eve stealing one of God’s apples the problem?

**into the world,** - Wasn’t sin – in Satan – already here before Adam and Eve were even tempted?

**and death by sin;** - Is this saying that sin caused death? Is the death of the sinner ultimately caused by God? Does God use sin to cause death?

**and so death passed upon all men.** - Were/are all punished because Adam messed up? Am I held responsible for his sin?

**for that all have sinned.” (Rom 5:12)** - Did a child who dies soon after birth sin? Did “all” include Jesus, born as a man?

For a better understanding of the meaning of “sin”/“sinned” in this verse and the remainder of Romans 5 go to [Sin in Romans 5](https://characterofgod.org/romans-5-12-21/) (https://characterofgod.org/romans-5-12-21/). Once the words are sorted out you will see the distinction Paul makes between acts of sins and the state of a sinful heart. Understanding the difference and recognizing it in scripture makes it much more understandable. I recommend you take a look at that and return here.

## The Origin and Solution for Sin in Mankind

If you have read the section on Romans 5 you will have seen the distinction between acts of sin and the sinful condition or heart. We need to understand that the problem is not so much the individual acts of sin (which are really just symptoms) but the sinful nature/heart (the underlying disease) that needs to be remedied. (Of course, I am not trying to minimize the harm that comes from sin.)

Consider that Eve first had a distrust of God as a result of listening to the lies of Satan. This caused a state of rebellion in her mind. Something like: “I want and am going to experience what God is keeping from me even if He said not to.” This then led to the outward act, what most people would term the first human sin. The order is:

distrust (a choice) → attitude of rebellion (a state of mind) → acts of sin

Really, every stage of that is sin, with the distrust being the most serious as it leads to the others. So, sin could be defined as being out of harmony with the will of God in:

- choice – to distrust
- state or nature – of rebellion with an inclination to act according to that distrust
- acts – individual violations of “rules”

**Notice that the word "sin" has an "i" in the middle.  
This reflects the self-centered reality of a sinful heart.**

It is very helpful to understand that the remedy for this situation in humanity needs to happen in the same order. Does resisting a temptation to sin lead a person to trust God? Not likely – that person may not even have heard of God. They may not steal simply from fear of being caught and punished. However, when a person comes to a point of trusting Him completely that inclination to sin will fade away along with the acts of sin. That state of trusting Him completely can only come by knowing Him very well – which is the whole object of this website and this glossary and why the study of the life of Christ as a revelation of the character of God is a most important activity. So, to reverse and remedy the sin problem again it starts with the question of trust:

trust (a choice) → attitude of compliance (a state of mind) → obedience

Sin is, most importantly, a choice to not trust God. When we decide to fully trust Him we can have the mind of Christ, His love in our heart and the correct behavior will follow.

There are many related terms and concepts not covered in this study:

- Original sin
- Sins of the Fathers
- Corporate sin
- Unpardonable sin
- Sin offering
- Forgiveness of sins
- Remission of sins
- Sin, Christ made to be

The truth that sin brings its own punishment is shown [here](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/). (https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/)

## Sin (made to be)

“Made Him to be sin” sounds like a strange concept. Here is the key scripture verse:

“For he hath **made him (Christ) to be sin** for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor 5:21)

**Traditional Legal Model** – Christ was made or reckoned to be as though He was a sinner, He was counted as guilty and, as such, was punished by God. In God’s reckoning the penalty Christ paid satisfies God’s justice and the demands of the law and means we don’t have to pay the penalty we deserve.

**Biblical Healing Model** – Christ was (at His incarnation) made to have sinful or fallen flesh, the same flesh we have which could be tempted (so no advantage over us), flesh weakened relative to Adam’s flesh by 4000 years of sin being passed down. In that human nature, by faith, He totally depended on His Father and never once yielded to temptation.

In the traditional understanding, God has to have blood and death in order to grant forgiveness. In contrast, the Bible indicates that sin is always freely offered – see the glossary **definition for forgiveness**. God counted His Son as guilty (made Him to be sin) and, because Jesus paid the death penalty, we can be forgiven. – someone has to pay. [Timothy Jennings](https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/) (<https://characterofgod.org/timothy-jennings/>) has a good explanation for this:

“Generally, there are two views of Christ as our substitute. The first view stems from a legal mindset in which God has enacted, created, imposed, or otherwise sanctioned laws to govern His universe. Intelligent beings are subject to these laws and disobedience is met with an imposed penalty of death. In this view, God must impose the death penalty on the disobedient in order to be “just” and ensure His “law” remains authoritative.” (<http://www.comeandreason.com/index.php/media-center/blog-menu/111-christ-our-substitute>)

In the thinking of most people, God’s solution for how to save us in light of the above was to make His Son be sin for us and have Him pay the penalty. Again, here is **Tim Jennings’** explanation:

“Those who hold this model view sinful mankind under the legal condemnation of God and without hope of life eternal, unless some way is found to “beat the system.” The way the proponents of this theory solve their dilemma is to claim that Jesus came as their “legal substitute” by living a perfect life and offering Himself to “pay our legal debt” by God “executing punitive justice” upon His Son such that He dies in our place as our substitute for the crimes of sin we committed. After this was done, we were then granted “forgiveness” and life eternal, but only if we accept this payment of Christ in our behalf. Christ gets to live again because He never actually sinned and we get to live



forever because He paid our legal debt. This is commonly called the “penal substitution model.” Notice how in this model the system is “rigged” so that both Christ and the sinner get to live eternally, while the claim is maintained that Christ “paid” the “debt” of eternal death. Hmm...” (<http://www.comeandreason.com/index.php/media-center/blog-menu/111-christ-our-substitute>)

Can you see the problem with this legal/penal model? It makes God like pagan gods – requiring the payment of blood (death) before He can forgive. That is not the character of the true God, the ever-merciful, freely-forgiving God of love.

## What "Made Him to be Sin" Really Means

The Bible gives evidence that the true meaning of “made him to be sin” is that God sent His Son to meet and overcome sin in our condition, our **sinful flesh**, our flesh that is so prone to putting self first. A careful examination of verses that speak of Christ’s incarnation and nature show this to be so. For example:

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:” (Rom 8:3)

The “sending ... in the likeness of sinful flesh” is equivalent to “made him to be sin for us.” To condemn sin in the flesh (our flesh) is to show that it is not necessary to sin. For a fuller study of this important topic and its connection to the character of God go to: [2 Corinthians 5:21 The Great Exchange?](https://characterofgod.org/2-corinthians-521-the-great-exchange/) (<https://characterofgod.org/2-corinthians-521-the-great-exchange/>)

## Sinful flesh

- see entry for "[sin, made to be](#)"

## Sinner

**Traditional legal Model** - a sinner is someone who commits a sin as in "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4) However, many people would call someone a sinner only if they were particularly bad and significantly worse (in terms of visible acts) than themselves.

**Biblical Healing Model** - the Bible says that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23) therefore all are sinners by nature even before they are sinners by action. A sinner is not a sinner merely because of an action. They are already sinners by inherited nature. However, that nature can change upon repentance, (a change of heart) at which point the person (while perhaps not sinless) has a different attitude towards God and could be referred to as a saint.

### From a Modern Dictionary

**Sinner** (noun)

1. a person who sins; transgressor.

(<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sinner?s=t>)

### Webster's 1828 Dictionary

**Sinner** (noun)

1. One that has voluntarily violated the divine law; a moral agent who has voluntarily disobeyed any divine precept, or neglected any known duty.

2. It is used in contradistinction to saint, to denote an unregenerate person; one who has not received the pardon of his sins.

### Sinner Definition; What Does the Bible Say?

To many people, a sinner is just someone who commits more or worse sins (in their minds) than themselves. But the Bible says:

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

If all have sinned, it is logical that all are sinners. But doesn't "all" include young children, even babies? Have they sinned? Here is a similar verse:

"What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;" (Rom 3:9)

What does "under sin" mean? Perhaps under the guilt of sin or under condemnation for their sins? But what about a newborn who can't be said to have committed an act of sin? Scripture is clear that a person is not held guilty for the sins of another:

"... The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Eze 18:20)

So "all" cannot be considered guilty of having consciously committed a sinful act. But all are under the effects of the sinful nature they had no choice in receiving.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Pa 51:5)

That verse is not saying that the act of conception is sinful but that the nature of that which is conceived is sinful. "In sin" could be "with a sinful nature." With that fallen nature it is very easy to yield to sin with this result:

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

As death in that verse is contrasted with "eternal life," the death being referred to is the eternal or second death. (Refer to [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire) ebook) (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)

In Romans 6:23 ("... the wages of sin *is* death ..."), the death is not punishment for sin but the natural effects of having inherited a fallen, weakened nature making us more prone to sin leading to eternal death unless that nature is changed.

And note that the wages are not paid by God but by sin itself (as a consequence) as stated in this version:

"For sin pays its wage--death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23, Good News Translation)

So, sinner, don't think you are any better than someone else who has committed worse sins. We are all sinners - contaminated from conception with a sinful nature. What we all need is not simply more effort to stop from committing acts of sin (which is still good to do) but more effort to behold the glory and goodness in the character of God which will lead to repentance (Rom 2:4) and the change in nature from sinner to saint that we all need.

# Smote

**Traditional Legal Model** - Smote or to smite is used both as a physical blow or as the conscience being smitten.

**Biblical Healing Model** - The word is used similarly except that this model recognizes that often when God is said to smite it is by withdrawing His protection. It is also understood in the sense of to get someone's attention.

**Smote** is the simple past tense of **smite**.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### Smite (verb)

- to strike or hit hard, with or as with the hand, a stick, or other weapon
- to affect mentally or morally with a sudden pang: His conscience smote him.
- to affect suddenly and strongly with a specified feeling: They were smitten with terror. (dictionary.com, accessed Dec. 10, 2018)

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

### Smite (verb)

To strike; to throw, drive or force against, as the fist or hand, a stone or a weapon; to reach with a blow or a weapon; as, to *smite* one with the fist; to *smite* with a rod or with a stone.

It seems strange that Webster's would not include a reference to the conscience being smitten while dictionary.com does. However, as we will see, the Bible clearly uses it that way.

## Not Always a Lethal Blow

It is used for clapping (smitting hands together):

"And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king." (2 Kings 11:12)

It is used in regard to non-animate objects:

"And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground." (2 Kings 2:8)

Used of "smiting" with words (the tongue).

"Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." (Jer 18:18)

## The Conscience Can be Smitten

"And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt." (1 Sam 24:5)

"And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam 24:10)

This is the same effect as in this New Testament verse:

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 Joh 3:21)

The heart does not condemn; the conscience does not smite - if the person's heart and actions are right with God.

The accusers of the woman caught in adultery were smitten in this same sense:

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." (John 8:9)

However, in their cases, there was no repentance; they ignored the voice of their consciences.

## Attempts to Correct

Smiting can occur in attempts to correct or discipline but that would never be lethal. (You never correct your children by killing them):

"In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion." (Jer 2:30)

"O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken (H5221) them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." (Jer 5:3)

Those verses connect "smitten" or "stricken" (from the same original word) with attempts at correction, unfortunately, without a positive response.

## Smite to Get Attention

To smite is often used in the sense of getting one's attention, especially to call to repentance. I think this may even apply to the seven last plagues:

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." (Rev 11:6)

In describing the reaction to the fourth and fifth plagues, it is said that men "repented not" suggested that, if they might have chosen to do so, they could have.

Elymas the Sorcerer, while it does not use the word (as for the people of Sodom - Gen 19:11), was smitten with blindness. Read the interesting [story of Elymas](https://characterofgod.org/elymas-sorcerer/) (https://characterofgod.org/elymas-sorcerer/) and the connection with Paul and how he was "smitten" with blindness perhaps as a call to repentance.

An angel "smote" Peter to wake him up and get him out of prison:

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." (Acts 12:7)

## Mistakenly Understood as a Physical Blow

The usual understanding of the **death of King Herod** is that God had His angel smite Herod dead (Because God can't stand being challenged? Does that make sense?):

"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." (Acts 12:21-23)

However, notice that, in the same chapter, the same angel smote (same original word) Peter to get his attention:

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." (Acts 12:7)

Here is a detailed look at [the death of King Herod](https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) (https://characterofgod.org/death-king-herod/) including clues that he may have repented and been saved.

## Who Smote Who?

To smite is often used in the sense of a lethal blow. In some verses, God is said to smite when it is also clearly stated that someone else struck the blow. For example:

"And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword." (Jud 20:35)

The [death of King Saul](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#death-of-saul) (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame#death-of-saul) is another good example among others. It is a Biblical principle that [God often takes responsibility](https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/) for what He merely allows to happen. (https://characterofgod.org/love-takes-responsibility/)

## Sovereign\*

(supplemental term)

One who is sovereign has supreme power or authority; they answer to no one else. Obviously, only God has this in the truest sense and it is often said (even to excuse questionable acts of God) that because He is God He can do whatever He wants. Yes, God is sovereign but His sovereign will is to act within His character of love and that necessarily restricts what He can do. For example, scripture indicates that "... God, that cannot lie ..." (Titus 1:2) God, being love (1 John 4:8), cannot do anything that is not in the best interests of another being.

## Strange Act

**Traditional Legal Model:** For the good of the universe and to end their misery God destroys the lost in His "strange act."

**Biblical Healing Model:** As in the examples included in the verse where it is mentioned (Isa 28:21), God, not being a God of force or coercion, honors man's free will choices. It is a strange act for Him to do it, but He allows man to receive the even hurtful natural consequences of his decisions.

We sometimes hear of "God's strange act." Here is the verse where it is referred to:

"For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount **Perazim**, he shall be wroth as *in* the valley of **Gibeon**, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." (Isa 28:21)

A Google search for "God's strange act" brought up this example:

"Three major final events will affect the wicked:

1. The plagues
2. The millennium
3. The final judgment

These events fulfil '*God's strange act*,' an act which appears contradictory to His love and mercy. For the safeguard of the whole universe God acts wisely and justly in the destruction of sin and sinners." (<https://sdarm.org/publications/bible-study-guide/ptoc/lesson-29>)



That website reflects the understanding of many Christian groups about the meaning of God's strange act. The basic idea is they've been warned, God doesn't like to have to do it but, for the good of the universe and to put sinners out of their misery, God will destroy them. So "God's strange act" is often used in connection with the common understanding of especially this verse:

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."  
(Rev 20:15)

This quote describes the thinking of many:

"One way that people have tried to resolve the tension between a loving and a vengeful God is to suggest that God is typically loving in nature, but in very extreme circumstances He will change for a brief moment in order to restore harmony to the Universe. This is referred to as His strange work." (God's Strange Act, Adrian Ebens)

Why would that be a problem?

- It has God using death as the final solution
- It contradicts an ever-merciful God
- It goes against how God describes His own emotions

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." (Hosea 11:8)

That verse has God expressing how hard it is for Him to do what? - To destroy those cities (along with Sodom and Gomorrah)? No. Rather, to give them up, to deliver them to destruction from another source.

Why are people thinking God's strange act refers to Him carrying out destruction? Preconceived ideas are, no doubt, involved but also because they are simply not reading what scripture says. It says "as in" two other situations. So how was it in mount Perazim and the valley of Gibeon?

## "As in Mount Perazim"

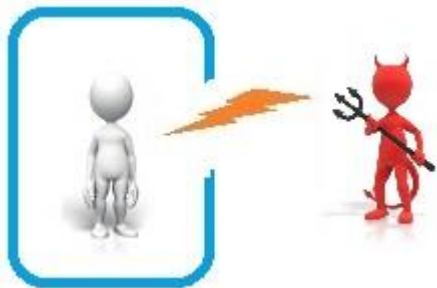
God's strange work in Isaiah is compared to what He did on Mount Perazim. Why? Logically, because God's predicted strange act would occur in a similar way. At Mount Perazim, there was a battle between David and the Philistines:

"But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David

enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for **I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.** And David came to Baalperazim, and **David smote them there**, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place **Baalperazim.**" (2 Sam 5:17-20)

"Baalperazim" has the meaning of "Baal (or Lord) of breakings forth" or "possessor of breaches" (Biblehub.com). What happened there was that God allowed the Philistines to fall into the hand of David and his army. While God did nothing to protect the Philistines, He did not personally fight against them. "Perazim" is from the plural form of the Hebrew word "perets" which is most commonly translated as "breach." A good way to think of it is as a breach in the wall of God's protection of the Philistines. The word "deliver," in verse 19, is from the Hebrew word "nathan." See the definition for that word at: <https://characterofgod.org/sent-definition/>.

We should not think that a God of love only cared about the nation of Israel. He loves and cares for all but when people reject Him, He honors their decision to withdraw from Him. This can be understood as creating a breach in the protection and care God has for every person. It can be illustrated like this and is explained further in regard to [the law of God](#). (<https://characterofgod.org/gospel-models-law/>)



## "As *in* the Valley of Gibeon"

The people of Gibeon made peace with Israel and were threatened by other nations for doing so. They asked Joshua to come and save them and the Lord reassured Joshua:

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for **I have delivered [nathan] them** [the kings of the Amorites who were threatening Gibeon] into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." (Joshua 10:8)

The promise to Joshua was that the kings of the Amorites would be delivered into his hand. The "into thine hand" indicating that Joshua and the Israelites would deal with them. The Hebrew word "[nathan](#)" (<https://characterofgod.org/sent-definition#nathan>) is frequently used with

that meaning in scripture. The following verses do present a challenge to the idea that God gave the Amorites over to Israel to deal with:

"And the LORD **discomfited** them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at **Gibeon**, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, *and* were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD **cast down [shalach]** great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: *they were* more which died with hailstones than *they* whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."  
(Joshua 10:10-11)

A challenge because of phrases that read like God personally took direct aggressive action:

- "the LORD **discomfited** them"
- "and **slew** them with a great slaughter"
- "and **smote** them to Azekah"
- "the LORD **cast down** great stones"

However, aside from clues already mentioned, there is more evidence that God did not literally kill the Amorites in the following verses:

"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD **delivered up [nathan]** the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." (Josh 10:12)

"Delivered up the Amorites" amounts to allowing Israel to deal with them.

"And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until **the people had avenged themselves** upon their enemies. *Is* not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." (Josh 10:13)

"The people had avenged themselves" - they did it. The Hebrew verb is in the active (Qal) form.

In summary, there are several clues in the story:

- The meaning of "nathan" ("delivered") (v8, 12)
- The meaning of "discomfited" (v10)
- The meaning of "shalach" ("cast down") (v11)
- "The people (Israel) had avenged themselves" (v13)

More importantly than making a decision based on the number of points for each position within just that story is to look at the bigger picture. While God is at times described as taking

certain actions, there are enough linguistic and other factors involved that should cause us to dig deeper. We need to compare with principles such as "... God is love" (1 John 4:8) and other verses telling about God and His ways such as:

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," (Luke 6:27)

"And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace." (Mark 3:4)

In that verse, Jesus equates to kill with to do evil.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" (Heb 2:14)

The "through death" there is referring to Jesus' own death. He does not administer death to others to further His cause. In fact, death is referred to as an enemy:

"The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death." (1 Corinthians 15:26)

That God would personally use death to destroy death makes no sense.

## **By Beholding We Are Changed**

Lastly, we become like the concept we have of God's character:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18)

# Sword

Matthew 10:34 includes some rather strange sounding words by Jesus:

**“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matt 10:34)**

Is it really Jesus’ desire to send a sword – strife, bloodshed and death? Doesn’t that seem contradictory?

We all know what a literal sword is. This page is more concerned with the sword as a symbol in scripture and its use in relation to God. Especially, we want to understand its use in Matthew 10:34.

**Traditional Legal Model** – mainly, the sword is used by God as a symbol of His justice or revenge either executed personally or through Israel’s enemies.

**Biblical healing Model** – the sword is used as a symbol of the consequences (often via Israel’s enemies) of his people departing from Him and thus losing his protection. It is never wielded by God’s hand to inflict injury.

It is used symbolically in both models to represent God’s word. This page especially focuses on how it might cause division without God being to blame for it.

The first indication there is something wrong with the idea that Jesus sends a sword to cause injury is in the description of the Savior Himself:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isa 9:6)

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14)

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

“The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)” (Acts 10:36)

## The Sword as a Symbol

We need to look at the symbolism of a sword.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **word** of God:” (Eph 6:17)

From that verse, we can equate a sword with the word:

**sword = word**

Further evidence comes from:

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” (Rev 19:15)

The symbolism is fairly obvious. There is no literal sword coming out of His mouth but His words. Now we can take the comparison further:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

**sword = word = truth**

This verse tells us more about the meaning and function of a sword:

“For the **word** of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged **sword**, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a **discerner** of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb 4:12)

Here is the definition of “discerner” from Webster’s 1828 Dictionary:

### **Discerner (noun)**

1. One who sees, discovers or distinguishes; an observer.
2. One who knows and judges; one who has the power of distinguishing.  
He was a great observer and *discerner* of men's natures and humors.
3. That which distinguishes; or that which causes to understand.

The word of God is quick and powerful—a *discerner* of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12.

Now we can expand the comparison:

sword = word = truth = **discerner**

What does that mean? The sword is the word which, since it is truth, will help the one who sincerely reads it to discern truth. But what truth? The verse tells us: “the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Of course, it is we that need to properly understand the thoughts and intents of our own hearts – basically, our own condition. And we are told:

“The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

So since the sword or word helps us to discern truth how could that result in division as we think the sword to mean?

## Divisions Will Happen

There is evidence that the truth divides or separates, even within families:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household.” (Matt 10:34-36)

In John 6, Jesus spoke a very sublime truth”

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

But that truth resulted in division:

“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? ... From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” (John 6:60, 66)

So the result of the sword/word which helps to discern truth is often division:

sword = word = truth = **discerner** → **division**

We further see that the Word is equated in scripture with Jesus:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**” (John 1:1)

“And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The **Word of God**.” (Rev 19:13)

We can take our comparison still further:

**Jesus = sword = word = truth = discerner → division**

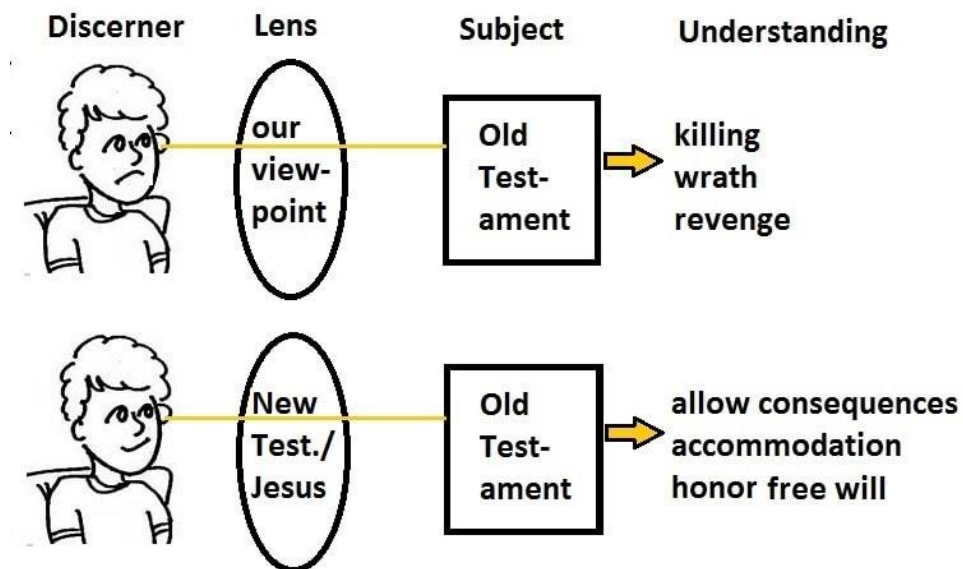
Now we are connecting Jesus with a source of division. However, it was and is not His purpose to cause division. The problem is man’s reaction to truth. When some reject truth and others accept it, that naturally results in division.

## Much Depends on Your Viewpoint

Much in the Old Testament, when read with the common understanding and a mind not open to truth, causes people to turn away from God. Indeed, most of even the Christian world views God as condemning and judgmental – out to find fault with us.

But what happens if a person actually reads and studies the word of God especially the difficult parts of the Old Testament with a mind open to truth and through the lens of the New Testament revelation of Christ? In other words, with a correct concept of the character of God.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it [he] shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.” (2 Cor 3:14-16)





Looking through “the Jesus lens” is removing the veil that is over our eyes that prevents us from correctly understanding the true character of the God of the Old Testament

There is a sense in which that correct understanding is now causing a division among Christians. Many Bible students are looking carefully at the character of God as demonstrated by Jesus’ life. They are attempting to harmonize all they read with the fundamental truth that God is love and they are seeing many things in a new light. There are examples of members and ministers who have been excluded from churches and fellowship because their reading of the Bible through the lens of Christ’s character has given them a different picture of the character of God.

While it has never been Jesus’ purpose to bring a literal sword or cause any division, the result of truth discerned in His Word has been to cause division between not only believers and non-believers but also among believers with very different understandings of the character of God.

If we would all look through the same “lens,” comparing everything, especially those difficult Old Testament stories, with the life and character of Jesus we would gain a better appreciation of the wonderful character of God.

# Torment

**Traditional Legal Model** - Torment will, in the end, be applied by God to the lost as punishment for unrepentant and unpaid-for sin. In some belief systems, that torment (in flames) is eternal.

**Biblical Healing Model** - Torment comes as a natural consequence of sin. Torment in the final judgment will be of the mental sort coming from the conscience. There is no eternal torment.

## Webster's 1828 dictionary

### Torment (noun)

1. Extreme pain; anguish; the utmost degree of misery, either of body or mind.)
2. That which gives pain, vexation or misery.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com>)

Torment covers a great range from merely bothersome to extreme pain. Modern dictionaries are similar. Torment can be physical or mental/emotional.

Differences between the two models are not so much about the meaning of torment as it is about the source of it. Let's examine scripture to determine the extent to which God might be involved in the torment people suffer.

## Torment Can Refer to Physical Pain

"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and **pained** to be delivered." (Rev 12:2)

"Pained," in that verse, is from the same Greek word usually translated as "tormented." Of course, there is also symbolic significance to that verse.

## Is Physical Torment Such as Blindness from God?

Torment is associated with a variety of conditions:

"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers **diseases** and **torments**, and those which were **possessed** with devils, and those which were **lunatick**, and those that had the **palsy**; and he healed them." (Matt 4:24)

Of the five categories, the nature of "torments" is possibly the least obvious.

Would it make sense that Jesus would heal or take away any of those conditions if they were purposely put there by God? Wouldn't that be undoing His Father's work? That has been suggested as in this verse:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but **that** the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:1-3)

Does that sound like his blindness was planned for a purpose?

The word "that" is from the Greek "hina" (G2443). It often expresses **purpose**. If it meant that in this case, it could say:

"he was born blind **so that** the works of God could be manifest"  
or

"he was born blind **in order for** the works of God to be manifest"

Then it could only have been God Who arranged for him to be born blind. But "hina" can also express **result** as in these examples:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so **that** ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal 5:17)

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, **that** that day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thess 5:4)

John 9:3 could be paraphrased like this:

"Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but **as a result** of his suffering the works of God will be made manifest in him."

We need to ask: "is it the work of God to inflict suffering or to relieve it? God does not send disease or cause people to be possessed or lunatic or paralyzed. Torment is not quite so obvious. Let's look at some verses about torment.

## Torment Before the Time

"And, behold, they [the devils] cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to **torment** us before the time?" (Matt 8:29)

The suggestion is that Jesus would torment them. What is "the time" that is referred to? It must be a time when devils (evil angels) will be tormented.

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

"And **the devil** that deceived them was cast into the **lake of fire** and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be **tormented** day and night for ever and ever." (Rev 20:10)

We will get into the detail of those verses in a bit but the question now is simply: why does it seem like the torment is originating from God when to torment is against His character? To answer that we need to determine the correct meaning of the word torment.

## Meaning of "Torment"

Here is the definition for the Greek word most often translated as "torment."

### 928 βασανίζω basanizo bas-an-id'-zo

from **931**; v

AV-torment 8, pain 1, toss 1, vex 1, toil 1; 12

- 1) **to test (metals) by the touchstone**, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the colour of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal
- 2) to question by applying torture
- 3) to torture
- 4) **to vex with grievous pains** (of body or **mind**), to torment
- 5) to be harassed, distressed
- 5a) of those who at sea are struggling with a head wind



So, applied to people, it is a testing to see what one is made of; an examination of quality or character. It is also used in the sense of to torment or to vex the mind:

"(For that righteous man [Lot] dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, **vexed** his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)" (2 Peter 2:8)

The people of Sodom were not tormenting Lot physically. It was the "... seeing and hearing ...their unlawful deeds" that vexed him - it would have been a mental vexation.

## Connected to the Conscience

I am going to suggest that, in most of its uses, the torment is torment of the conscience. The conscience reveals something about us - to ourselves.

This verse relates what Stephen said after pointing out the sins of those who were persecuting him:

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

What were the "these things" that caused that reaction? It was their **sins** that Stephen listed in the previous verses especially:

"**Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised** in heart and ears, ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom **ye have been now the betrayers and murderers**: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and **have not kept it**." (Acts 7:51-53)

"**Cut to the heart**" sounds like affliction or torment of heart, mind or conscience. That would have stirred their consciences and made them aware of their condition. In reaction to Stephen tormenting their consciences, they were gnashing their teeth. There will be "**gnashing of teeth**" in the lake of fire as well.

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into **a furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and **gnashing of teeth**." (Matt 13:41-42)

## Rocks Fall on Us

Revelation 6 mentions the Second Coming and describes the reaction of people who are not happy to see Jesus coming:

"And **said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us**, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:" (Rev 6:16)

They will be more afraid of seeing the face of the Lamb (Who is as harmless as a baby sheep!) than of being crushed by rocks. It shows they are experiencing something worse than physical pain. Still in the scenario of the Second Coming or just before:

"And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets **tormented** (G928) them that dwelt on the earth." (Rev 11:10)

Do you think that is speaking of God's prophets physically tormenting people that live on earth? This is interesting:

"And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be **tormented** five months: and their **torment** (G929) was as the **torment** (G929) of a scorpion, when he striketh a man." (Rev 9:5)

The sting of a scorpion seems similar to the sting of a **hornet** or being **pricked** to the heart. Both are related to **the conscience**.

## The Lake of Fire

Here is a verse we saw earlier that sounds like something that could only be done by God:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be **tormented** (G928) day and night for ever and ever." (Rev 20:10)



This is said of those who take the mark of the beast:

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be **tormented** with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their **torment** ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have **no rest** day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Rev 14:10-11)

Here is the same passage from **The Remedy New Testament**:

"they will reap the full fury of unremedied sin when God no longer shields them from their destructive choice. They will experience immeasurable **torment of mind and burning anguish of heart** when they stand in God's **fiery presence** and are bathed in unquenchable fire of **truth and love**—all in the very presence of Jesus and the holy angels. The memory of their suffering and the lesson of their self-destructive choice will never be forgotten throughout all eternity. There will be **no peace of mind—day or night**—for those who prefer the methods of the beast and model after him, or for any who choose to mark themselves as followers of the beast." (Rev 14:10-11, The Remedy New Testament) (<http://comeandreason.com/rem/>)



A correct understanding of the meaning of "fire" and "**brimstone**" is important.

## "For Ever and Ever"

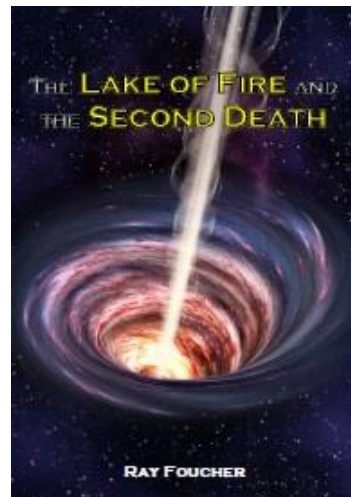
Those cast into the Lake of Fire are said to be tormented "for ever and ever." Another term for that is "eternal fire" as in:

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering **the vengeance of eternal fire**." (Jude 7)

That fire was not literally eternal; those cities are not still burning today. So, what does "eternal" or "for ever and ever" mean? It describes a continuous process the duration of which is determined by the context. You can't put out an unquenchable fire but it will eventually go out on its own. We all know that when the fuel is used up a fire goes out. The fire is not eternal but its effects are.

The "no rest" refers to "no peace of mind" as in the Remedy New Testament version above.

The "Lake of Fire" is a term for the experience of the final judgment at the end of the millennium, a judgment in which, as the expression goes, "all the evidence is on the table." It is described in the booklet [The Lake of Fire and the Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire). (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire>)



Torment is referred to in parables that can easily be misunderstood unless that word is correctly understood. [The Rich Man and Lazarus](https://characterofgod.org/rich-man-lazarus/) (Luke 16, <https://characterofgod.org/rich-man-lazarus/>) and the [Unforgiving Servant](https://characterofgod.org/unforgiving-servant/) (Matt 18, <https://characterofgod.org/unforgiving-servant/>) are two examples.

## How to Avoid Torment

It helps to understand that torment can come in two types.

"And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the **palsy**, grievously **tormented**."  
(Matt 8:6)

What was wrong with this servant? Notice the servant was both "sick of the palsy" ("palsy" in Greek is "paralutikos" or paralysis) and "tormented." What did Jesus say to the paralytic who was let down through the roof?

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." (Mark 2:5)

Why did He say "thy sins be forgiven" rather than "your paralysis be healed"? Perhaps the torment he was suffering was primarily the torment of a guilty conscience. Torment is connected with fear and the Bible gives the antidote for that:

"There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear**: because fear hath **torment** (H2851). He that feareth is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

We know that fear does not come from God:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (1 Tim 1:7)

To avoid torment at least of the mental/spiritual kind maintain a **clear conscience**.



# Traditional Legal Model\*

(supplemental term)

God designed His law and imposed, [arbitrary](#) penalties – ultimately, death – for violations which are called sins. Since He is a God of justice, evil stirs up His anger or wrath which must be appeased by a sacrifice including the shedding of blood. Those who finally reject salvation come under the awful curse of God who hates sin and will finally take vengeance by smiting them with fire from heaven – the second death.

A sinner whose guilty conscience brings conviction for his sinfulness can confess and be granted forgiveness because the ransom has been provided to legally cancel the debt. The propitiation brings atonement for the sins, the record of which is then erased from the books of heaven. The repentant sinner, by faith, is justified and declared to be (even if not actually) righteous. Having received salvation, he grows in sanctification towards perfection and, in the final investigative judgment, he will not come under condemnation.

Note that this website does not support this unbiblical, but commonly-believed understanding of the gospel.

## Vengeance

Note: this definition looks at vengeance especially of/by God towards sinners.

**Traditional Legal Model** - God inflicting punishment on the sinner in order to satisfy justice.

**Biblical Healing Model** - God allowing the sinner to experience the natural consequences of his choice to break the law in order to help him change his ways.

### From a Modern Dictionary

1. infliction of injury, harm, humiliation, or the like, on a person by another who has been harmed by that person; violent revenge: But have you the right to vengeance?
  2. an act or opportunity of inflicting such trouble: to take one's vengeance.
  3. the desire for revenge: a man full of vengeance.
- (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/vengeance?s=t>)

It is interesting that dictionary.com lists forgiveness as the antonym for vengeance. If God is ever-merciful or always-forgiving how can He engage in vengeance as we understand it? It would be impossible.

## Webster's 1828 Dictionary

"The infliction of pain on another, in return for an injury or offense. Such infliction, when it proceeds from malice or more resentment, and is not necessary for the purposes of justice, is **revenge**, and a most heinous crime. When such infliction proceeds from a mere love of justice, and the **necessity of punishing offenders for the support of the laws, it is vengeance** and is warrantable and just. In this case, *vengeance* is a just retribution, recompense or punishment. In this latter sense the word is used in Scripture, and frequently applied to the punishments inflicted by God on sinners." To me belongeth *vengeance* and recompense. Deuteronomy 32:35.  
(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/vengeance>)

Isn't that saying that vengeance to maintain justice is just? Is that correct? Or is that making any assumptions? It is important to have a right understanding of **the meaning of law** (<https://characterofgod.org/law-definition/>). (Are God's laws natural and consequential or arbitrary and imposed?) and **the meaning of justice**. (Is justice always imposing punishment or is it doing the right or just thing?)

## What does God Say About Vengeance?

"To me *belongeth vengeance*, and recompense; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." (Deut 32:35)

That verse is equating vengeance and recompense (payback) with a negative natural result to come. That is why certain actions are classed as sin - because you will be hurt if you do them and God does not want you to be hurt. He does not have to impose an external punishment for you to suffer when you sin.

So, we are punished by our sins rather than for our sins. God's vengeance is consequential not vindictive. Here is another example:

"Behold, he [the wicked] travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." (Psa 7:14-16)

"His mischief shall return" is equivalent to "their foot shall slide in *due* time." This is equivalent to the modern saying "what goes around comes around." There are many verses showing that [sin brings its own punishment](https://characterofgod.org/sin-destruction/) (negative consequence) as a natural result.

## Vengeance Easily Gets Out of Hand

Two children are playing and one hits the other with a toy. The one who was hit first does the same in return. What do we call that? - vengeance. How would you describe their behavior? - Childish. We tend to excuse them because they are children, they act childish. But how would you describe God's actions if He acted the same way? Some would say He is just to give payback but we need to understand the Bible position on **justice** and what it means for God to be **just**. Why



would God take active vengeance as we normally think of it? If He did, what would that say about Him?

A classic example of out-of-control vengeance is that of the Hatfields and McCoys, ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatfield-McCoy\\_feud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatfield-McCoy_feud)) two families whose extended feud in the late 1800s in the eastern United States resulted in several deaths on both sides.

## Advice Against Vengeance

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: [not man's wrath but God's] for it is written, Vengeance is mine **[not yours because you will do it wrong]**; I will repay, saith the Lord. **[how will I repay? This is how:]** Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil **[drawn into its way of doing things]**, but overcome evil with good." (Rom 12:17-21)

"And when this happens, my friends, do not take revenge—there is no need for it!—for every act of sin reacts upon the sinner, damaging and slowly destroying their God-given faculties. Be patient and permit God's wrath to work—God's wise method of letting one go to reap the consequences of one's choice—and hopefully it will bring your enemy to repentance; as it is written: "It is mine to discipline; I will settle any debts," says the Lord." (Rom 12:19, The Remedy New Testament)

Could "vengeance is mine" be saying we can't use it because we would pervert or misuse it? God does things differently than we do:

"For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD." (Isa 55:8)

Here is a verse suggesting that vengeance is permissible:

"And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again*." (Lev 24:19-20)

But what did Jesus say regarding this?

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt 5:38-39)

It could be reasoned that the verse from Leviticus was not prescribing vengeance but putting a permissible limit on it.

## God's Vengeance

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," (Luke 6:27)

Do you suppose that God takes His own advice? That is suggested:

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt 5:45)

Man takes vengeance, in its most extreme form, by doing away with his enemies by killing them. Like moving towards them with a weapon in hand. God's form of vengeance involves moving away from those who reject Him leaving them to the consequences of their freely-chosen actions in the hopes they will learn from them and turn to Him in repentance. Ultimately, His goal is to do away with His enemies by turning them into his friends.

Listen to this short audio on how God takes vengeance:  
(<https://characterofgod.org/wp-content/uploads/Maxwell-on-vengeance.mp3>)

How does one become our enemy? Usually, by doing something bad to us. And we might say in response "I'll remember that" in a tone of voice implying the intention to make them pay for their wrong. However, God does not keep track of wrong's done to Him for the purpose of punishment.

"It [love] does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." (1 Cor 13:5, NIV)

God's final act in dealing with sinners that many perceive to be an act of vengeance is explained in my e-book [The Lake of Fire and Second Death](https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire) (https://characterofgod.org/resources#lake-of-fire)

## James and John - Sons of Thunder and Vengeance

Here is one example of how Jesus reacted to a suggestion of vengeance by two of His disciples when the people of a Samaritan village would not welcome Him:

"And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even [as Elias did](https://characterofgod.org/elijah-captains-50/) (https://characterofgod.org/elijah-captains-50/)? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village." (Luke 9:54-56)

Implied in that rebuke is that they were of the spirit of **the destroyer**. Jesus' solution to the slight He received was to simply move on; to go to another village.

## Summary

- Man's vengeance is vindictive. We say: "I'll pay you back for that."
- God's vengeance is consequential. He says: "OK if that's the way you want to do it, I'm not going to stop you, but you will suffer as a result."

Actually, we will find, in many cases, that God's "vengeance" includes actions that may turn the sinner around. And we could ask why would the Lord want to take man's form of vengeance on sinners when He has died for them? It doesn't make sense. What is gained by such actions?

# Visit

**Traditional Legal Model:** In the Old Testament, the common phrase "to visit the iniquity" is understood in the sense of "to punish."

**Biblical Healing Model:** The common Hebrew word used is "paqad" often meaning to visit to bless but, at times, is clearly stated as visiting to punish. When so used, however, it is punishing in the sense of allowing the natural consequences of wrong actions to occur.

**Note:** this definition is closely linked to that for the word "**punishment**" as the two are closely related. This page deals mostly with the concept in the Old Testament where there could be misunderstanding. In the New Testament, the word "visit" is used with the meaning "to spend time with someone" especially in the sense of "to be a blessing."

Both **Modern Dictionaries** and **Webster's 1828 Dictionary** include a wide range of meanings, both including the concept "to visit with punishment."

The concept of "visiting" in scripture is often associated with visiting iniquity as in this verse:

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;" (Exo 20:5)

It is often thought of in the context of punishment but is that correct? Let's examine the Biblical meaning of "to visit." The definition the Bible itself gives can help determine our understanding of His involvement in punishing.

## "Visit" Meaning in Hebrew

The words "visit," "visited" and "visiting" in the Old Testament are from the Hebrew word "paqad" (Strong's H6485) which is commonly translated as

- 119 Number
- 59 Visit -ing -ed
- 31 Punish
- 96 miscellaneous others (15+ words)

Note that, of 305 uses, only about 10% are translated as "punish."

The meaning is given (On line Bible) as: to attend to, muster, number, reckon, visit, punish, appoint, look after, care for

- 1a1) to pay attention to, observe
- 1a2) to attend to
- 1a3) to seek, look about for
- 1a4) to seek in vain, need, miss, lack
- 1a5) to visit
- 1a6) to visit upon, punish
- 1a7) to pass in review, muster, number
- 1a8) to appoint, assign, lay upon as a charge, deposit

Note that the concept of "punishment" is not very prominent in that list. See the glossary entry for "**punishment**" for more on that term which is often translated from the same Greek word "paqad." Also, please see the page [Matthew 25:46](https://characterofgod.org/matthew-25-46/) (https://characterofgod.org/matthew-25-46/) for the meaning of words used for punishment in the New Testament.

## The Meaning of "to Visit"

Let's allow the Bible itself to explain the meaning of "to visit."

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting (paqad, H6485) the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;" (Ex 20:5)

Does that sound like punishment? Would it be fair to punish children, grandchildren and beyond for an ancestor's sins? Some versions are even worse and actually use "punishment":

"Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the LORD your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation." (Exo 20:5, Good News Translation)

But the Bible says:

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Eze 18:20)

What does that mean? The guilt of sin is not inherited as opposed to the effects of people's sins.

Also, the visiting to the third and fourth generation thing could be meant to be a means of blessing; good character traits meant to have an effect in future generations. Don't we see our

own temperament in our children? Science has demonstrated that, through epigenetics, cultivated character traits can be inherited. Visiting "to the third and fourth generation" could be a way of saying that the injurious effects of the iniquity of the fathers has limited inheritability but mercy and blessings are not so limited (Exo 20:6)

## Visit ("paqad") to Bless

The Hebrew word "paqad" is translated as "visited" more often than as "punish" and it is usually to visit with a blessing as in some common examples:

Abraham's wife Sarah was blessed with a child:

"And the LORD visited (paqad) Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken." (Gen 21:1)

Israel was blessed in their return to the Promised Land:

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit (paqad) you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." (Gen 50:24)

The following verse is interesting as the KJV translates the original Hebrew word "paqad" as both "punished" and "visited":

"Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished (paqad) the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited (paqad) his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle." (Zech 10:3)

The second use of "paqad," translated "visited," sounds like a blessing, the opposite of a punishment. ("Goats" is symbolic of leaders as in Isa 14:9 where the same original word is translated as "chief ones.") "Paqad" in the verse above could actually have the meaning of "to pay attention to" or "observe" in both cases if the goats are part of the flock.

Here is another verse of interest:

"The **punishment** of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will **visit** thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins." (Lam 4:22)

The interlinear indicates that "paqad" does not appear in the original where the KJV gives the word "punishment." Rather, the words "taman" (H8552) and "avon" (H5771) appear together having a meaning more like "the end of thine iniquity." It may have been assumed by the translators that the end or result of iniquity is punishment and therefore they added the word



punishment, when it could as easily have been the results/natural consequences of an act of iniquity as in "you reap what you sow."

Here is another use of "paqad" of interest:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest (paqad) him?" (Psa 8:4)

The word "paqad" in Hebrew, when quoted in a New Testament verse, is understood as a visit:

"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Heb 2:6)

The Greek word (episkeptomai, G1980) used there, in its eleven New Testament occurrences, is always in the context of a blessing and is never used for punishment.

## An Important Principle

Many Bible commentators have recognized that God is often said to do what He merely allowed or permitted. It is often the case where God's withdrawal of His influence or protection results in apparent punishment at the hands of others. Here is one such statement:

"By withdrawing the Divine protection the idolatrous Israelites were delivered up into the hands of their enemies, from whom the gods in whom they had trusted could not deliver them." (Adam Clarke, Commentary on Exo 20:5, 1831)

Go [here](https://characterofgod.org/i-create-evil/) for many more examples of this. (https://characterofgod.org/i-create-evil/)

## Summary

"To visit," as translated from the Hebrew word "paqad," is most often a reference to allowing the natural consequences of an action to occur. Paqad is also frequently used in the sense of God blessing a person.

## Works

Works have different purposes (perhaps even subconsciously) in the minds of those following the two different gospel models.

**Traditional Legal Model** - For people with the mindset of working their way to heaven it is to display character, to gain status, to bolster their pride, ultimately to earn heaven.

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,” (Matt 23:5)

**Biblical Healing Model** - For people who truly understand God’s character, their appreciation of and love for Him encourages them to reflect that character by their good works to attract others to Him.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16)

## The Reward for Works

**Traditional Legal Model** - The works-oriented person wants to work their way to heaven to receive the promised reward (or payment for their work):

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his **work** shall be.” (Rev 22:12)

This is misunderstood. There will be rewards in heaven, yes, but eternal life in heaven is not the reward. Eternal life is a free gift.

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

However, you need to receive the gift in order to be there to then also receive the rewards.

Actually, the reward for works with the wrong motivation are described:

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have **glory of men**. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” (Matt 6:2)

**Biblical Healing Model** – There is no “imposed” reward. The rewards are natural consequences such as:

“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41)

Note the difference between the gift of eternal life and the rewards that come during that life. I think that, in large part, those rewards will be in the form of the appreciation expressed by those we have helped along the way. (As we happen to cross paths with them perhaps every few thousand years in the vast universe and the zillions of years of eternity – think of it.)

## Some “Works” Verses

Works - the acts themselves - do not prove anything:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful **works**? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt 7:22-23)

This verse sounds like works will be rewarded:

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matt 16:27)

“Works,” in that verse, is not from the Greek word normally used for the works of man. It is in the context of making the right choices in life which will bring eternal life, resulting in being present in the hereafter to receive the rewards. The most important choice being not a physical work but what is stated here:

“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:28-29)

Our “work” is simply to believe or trust. That “work” is accomplished when we:

- “Taste and see that the LORD is good ...” (Psa 34:8)
- Get to know Him through His word
- Experience His trustworthiness in our lives
- Commune with Him in prayer
- Understand and appreciate His true character

All of which will increase our faith in Him.

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."  
(Rom 3:28)

"**Justified**" means to be set right with God. Note that the change is in us, not in God. It is, essentially, an adjustment to our thinking; a very major one as it turns out. It really is a paradigm shift in our concept of God's character.

"**Faith**," in that verse, is from the Greek word "pistis" (G4102) which is the noun form of the word pisteuo (G4100).

The original word for "deeds" in Romans 3:28 is the same as that for "works" in John 6:28.

Here are additional verses saying the same:

"Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the **works** of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal 2:16)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8-9)

Here is a passage that might often be seen as differing with ones presented here earlier:

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? **Was not Abraham our father justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified**, and not by faith only." (James 2:20-24)

Here is another version of that passage that helps the understanding:

"You ineffectual people! Must you be shown that trust in a remedy without applying it is useless? Don't you understand that our forefather Abraham was **put right with God when his trust was applied** in offering Isaac on the altar? Can't you see that it is his trust that caused him to act as he did? His trust became effectual by what he did. This is the meaning of the Scripture that says, "Abraham trusted God and was restored to harmony with God," and he was therefore God's friend. Do you understand that a person is restored to harmony with God by the application of God's methods through trust, and not simply by trust without application?" (James 2:20-24, The Remedy New Testament)

## “There is nothing wrong with legalism.”

I have heard people say just that but there is everything wrong with legalism. Legalism (“-ism” refers to a belief system) is the philosophy that a person can be **saved by their works**; by keeping the law perfectly.

Works do not establish our trust in and relationship with God. It is more like when we do good works God owes us. Then who is the savior?

Works do have their place as discussed in James chapter 2. It is true that genuine faith cannot exist without corresponding works but those works are an evidence of the faith not the source of it.

“... by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal 2:16)

## Summary

Our value with God does not come through our performance (legal standing) based on our works but because of our relationship as sons and daughters of God. He sees us as valuable simply because He made us and loves us. In connection with that, I would like to recommend the book [Identity Wars](https://characterofgod.org/resources#identity-wars) (<https://characterofgod.org/resources#identity-wars>) which can help you to find your true identity.

# Wrath

**Note** this is a longer definition page but a very important term to understand.

**Traditional Legal Model** – God’s outrage at the wrong done to Him; at how He has been treated. It is directed towards the one who has carried out the act and has a degree of retribution associated with it – to make the offender pay; to even the score so to speak.

**Biblical Healing Model** – How God feels (grief) and what He does in response to man’s sinful/distrustful actions. He will always honor man’s freedom of choice by accommodating people with their desires to go the way they want allowing them to reap the consequences of their choices even if detrimental.

"Wrath" and "anger" are each translated from several different Hebrew and Greek words (list near bottom of page). And many of those are translated as both "wrath" and "anger" and often several other words. As “anger” and “wrath” are used almost interchangeably in scripture, they are treated together in this glossary.

## From a Modern Dictionary

### **Anger (noun)**

a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong; wrath; ire.

### **Wrath (noun)**

strong, stern, or fierce anger; deeply resentful indignation; ire.

vengeance or punishment as the consequence of anger.

(www.dictionary.com)

## From Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

### **Anger (noun)**

1. A violent passion of the mind excited by a real or supposed injury; usually accompanied with a propensity to take vengeance, or to obtain satisfaction from the offending party. This passion however varies in degrees of violence, and in ingenuous minds, may be attended only with a desire to reprove or chide the offender.

(<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/anger>)

### **Wrath (noun)**

1. Violent anger; vehement exasperation; indignation; as the wrath of Achilles.

When the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased—Esther 2:1.

O Lord—in wrath remember mercy. Habakkuk 3:2.

2. The effects of anger. Proverbs 27:3.

3. The just punishment of an offense or crime. Romans 8:1.  
 God's wrath in Scripture is his holy and just indignation against sin. Romans 1:18.  
 (<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/wrath>)

## Wrath as a Metaphor

Author [Brian Zahnd](https://characterofgod.org/brian-zahnd/) (<https://characterofgod.org/brian-zahnd/>) describes the wrath of God:

"The wrath of God is a Biblical metaphor we use to describe the very real consequences we suffer from trying to go through life against the grain of love. Canadian theologian Brad Jersak says, 'The wrath of God is understood as **divine consent to our own self-destructive defiance**.' When we sin against the two great commandments – to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves – we suffer the inevitable consequences of acting against love. We can call this the wrath of God if we like; the Bible does, but that doesn't mean that God literally loses his temper. God no more literally loses his temper than he sleeps, even though the Bible says 'The Lord awoke as from sleep.' Literalizing a divine metaphor always leads to error." (Brian Zahnd, *Sinners in the Hands of a Loving God*, p16-17)

A very good point. We will see further though that God does get angry, He does respond in wrath – when those words are understood as the Bible defines and uses them.

The wrath of God. Just what does the anger or wrath of God towards people look like? How is wrath understood? It is, first of all, an attitude towards another person of indignation, upset and often personal offense as might be expressed in the countenance of this image.



But it is more than just an attitude. To us it implies action or at least a strong desire to take action against the offending party. Any action would involve the wrathful one imposing a direct physical punishment by coming towards or sending towards the offender something to cause pain or loss. The object is to cause physical or mental pain or to coerce the offender into making some change against their will.

The one expressing the wrath is definitely putting their interests or desires ahead of those of the offender. This is the opposite of scriptures which speak of putting the interests of others first such as:

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." (1 Cor 10:24)

"Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor 10:33)

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Phil 2:4)

A basic concept of the view of God's character presented on this website is the principle that God cannot impose His will or presence on others without their consent. Basically, as a gentleman Who highly respects the free will of others, He cannot impose His presence or actions or influence where it is not desired. Such imposition would go against His character and violate the free will of another.

## So What Does God Do?

What attitude does God take? What was His record in dealing with Israel when they sinned? His responses were described in various ways including:

- forsaking - Deut 31:17, Isa 54:7-8
- hiding His face - Deut 31:17
- showing them His back - Jer 18:17
- neither will I be with you - Josh 7:12
- not hearkening to their voice - Deut 1:45
- delivering/giving up - Hosea 11:8
- deliver into the hand of enemies 2 Kings 21:14
- sold them into the hand of ... - Judg 2:14
- the Lord departed - Num 12:9
- removing them out of His sight - 2 Kings 17:23
- taking away the hedge - Isa 5:5
- breaking down the wall - Isa 5:5
- withdrawing His protection - Hosea 5:6

Those are not describing God taking direct personal action against people who have acted against Him although there are some cases where it **seems** to read that way such as:

### God Sending Fiery Serpents

"And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And **the LORD sent fiery serpents** among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Num 21:4-6)



It is commonly understood as though God purposely sent the serpents as punishment for their continual complaining. However, another passage reveals that, in fact, He was shielding them all along from serpents that were common in the wilderness.

“Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;” (Deut 8:15)

He accommodated their complaining and distrust of Him. Note that the word "**sent**" is often used in a permissive sense.

### God Killing King Saul

The death of King Saul is described in one account as an act of God:

“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.” (1Chr 10:13,14)

In another account, quite a different version of His death is reported:

“And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.” (1Chr 10:3,4)

God did not kill him, rather He honored Saul's free will to be independent of God and even consult a medium instead. It is specifically stated that the Lord had departed from Saul:

“But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.” (1 Sam 16:14)

Is it possible that the Spirit of the Lord honored (accommodated) the will of a man who would even turn to mediums rather than to God? See more [examples of God's accommodation](https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/) at (https://characterofgod.org/god-takes-the-blame/)

In such cases there is always an explanation from other accounts or from a careful examination of original words. The more extreme cases need to take into account basic Biblical principles the most important one being the simple statement that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, Rom 13:10) The word study of the term "**sent**" is also very important in understanding that many actions **seemingly** attributed to God were cases where He was seen and described as doing those things which He could not prevent.”

## Understanding God's Wrath and Anger

God's wrath can be better understood by breaking it down into:

What He is reacting to	man's sin
How He feels about it	God's wrath/anger
His action in response	God's accommodation - respecting free will, allowing the consequences etc
The result (usually negative)	trouble from another source

An example:

"And he [Moses] said, O my Lord, **send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send**. And **the anger of the LORD was kindled** against Moses, and he said, **Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well**. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." (Exo 4:13-14)

**The result** came later when Aaron could not stand up to the demands of the Israelites (like Moses might have done) and fashioned **the golden calf** for them to worship. Had Moses fully accepted the role God had prepared him for, this probably would not have happened. See a detailed discussion of this passage [here](https://characterofgod.org/moses-turns-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/moses-turns-god/) Note that the color coding above follows the system explained on [this page](https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/).

## Growth in Understanding

In an earlier understanding of this concept, I described this pattern as:

**Sins Wrath Allows Trouble = SWAT**

Man **Sins**,  
 God, in **Wrath**  
**Allows** man's free-will choices  
**Trouble** comes

And God does allow (He has the power to prevent) man to make his own choices and reap the results. However, "allows" can imply that God is no more than a casual observer in such circumstances. We know that God loves us too much to just disinterestedly watch us head down the wrong path. Rather than "allow," "accommodate" seemed a much better term. While He does not interfere to prevent, He may take other actions (consistent with honoring free will) such as:

- Appealing to our conscience to change course
- Allowing trouble to awaken us to a course of action
- Trying to reason with us to follow His way
- Taking into account a person's spiritual maturity and cultural situation

Here is a good example that includes all of the above:

"And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." (1 Sam 8:5)

Through Samuel, God tried to reason with them and warn them that this was not a good idea:

"And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you ... (1 Sam 8:11)

A long list of the problems a king would cause for them is given and then He said:

"And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and **the LORD will not hear you** in that day." (1 Sam 8:18)

It is not that God can't hear but that He allows us to experience the results of the choices we make. The people kept insisting:

"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; **That we also may be like all the nations**; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and **fight our battles**." (1 Sam 8:19-20)

Finally, God accommodated their desire:

"And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city." (1 Sam 8:22)

God had already promised to fight for them:

"For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." (Deut 20:4)

Clearly, asking for a king was a rejection of God as He stated:

"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but **they have rejected me**, that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam 8:7)

So here is the updated formula:

Man Sins,  
 God, in Wrath  
Accommodates man's decisions and  
Trouble comes

It is very common in scripture, in fact, there are [over 70 examples in scripture](https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) (https://characterofgod.org/wrath-of-god/) (and probably many more). I remember the formula as S-W-A-T: Sin - Wrath - Accommodation - Trouble

Some cases are clearly [accommodation](https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) (https://characterofgod.org/gods-accommodation-for-man/) as in adapting to the circumstances and culture of the people. Other cases seem like God simply honoring the free will of the people to go their own way.

## God's Experience

What is God experiencing in any of these situations where He is limited (by His respect for our free-will choices) in how He can guide, protect and support? There are clues in scripture:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, **how often would I have gathered thy children** together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt 23:37)

"**How shall I give thee up**, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? **mine heart is turned within me**, my repentings are kindled together." (Hosea 11:8)

"I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and **Israel would none of me**. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. **Oh that my people had hearkened unto me**, and Israel had walked in my ways!" (Psa 81:10-13)

So how do the feelings expressed in those verses match with the word "wrath"? They sound much more like grief.

## "Anger" in Scripture

Well it so happens that the most common word translated as "anger" or "wrath" in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "aph" (H639):

**aph** from 0599; n m;

AV-anger 172, wrath 42, face 22, nostrils 13, nose 12, angry 4, longsuffering + 0750 4, before 2, countenance 1, forbearing 1, forehead 1, snout 1, worthy 1; 276

1) nostril, nose, face

2) anger

"Aph" also has the meaning of the face or even just the nostrils/nose:

"David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face <H639> to the earth, and bowed himself." (1 Sam 24:8)

## Hiding the Face

This is one expression often used in such cases of God hiding His face which a person might do when experiencing strong emotion. In Deuteronomy, anger is associated with hiding the face:

"Then my **anger** shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I **will hide my face from them**, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And **I will surely hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods." (Deut 31:17-18)

In the New Testament, Mark associates anger with the emotion of being grieved:

"And when he had looked round about on them **with anger, being grieved** for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." (Mark 3:5)

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and **wept over it**," (Luke 19:41)

The weeping was because of the destruction that Jerusalem was to bring on itself due to its continuous rejection of Him. In fact, the acronym could stay as SWAT and yet be understood as:

- **Sin** of rejection of the Messiah
- **Weeping** of Jesus in response
- **Accommodation** of their wish to leave Jesus out of the temple
- **Trouble** from the Roman siege decades later

As already mentioned, anger can be associated with God hiding His face. It can also be linked by the use of Hebrew parallelism to God forsaking:

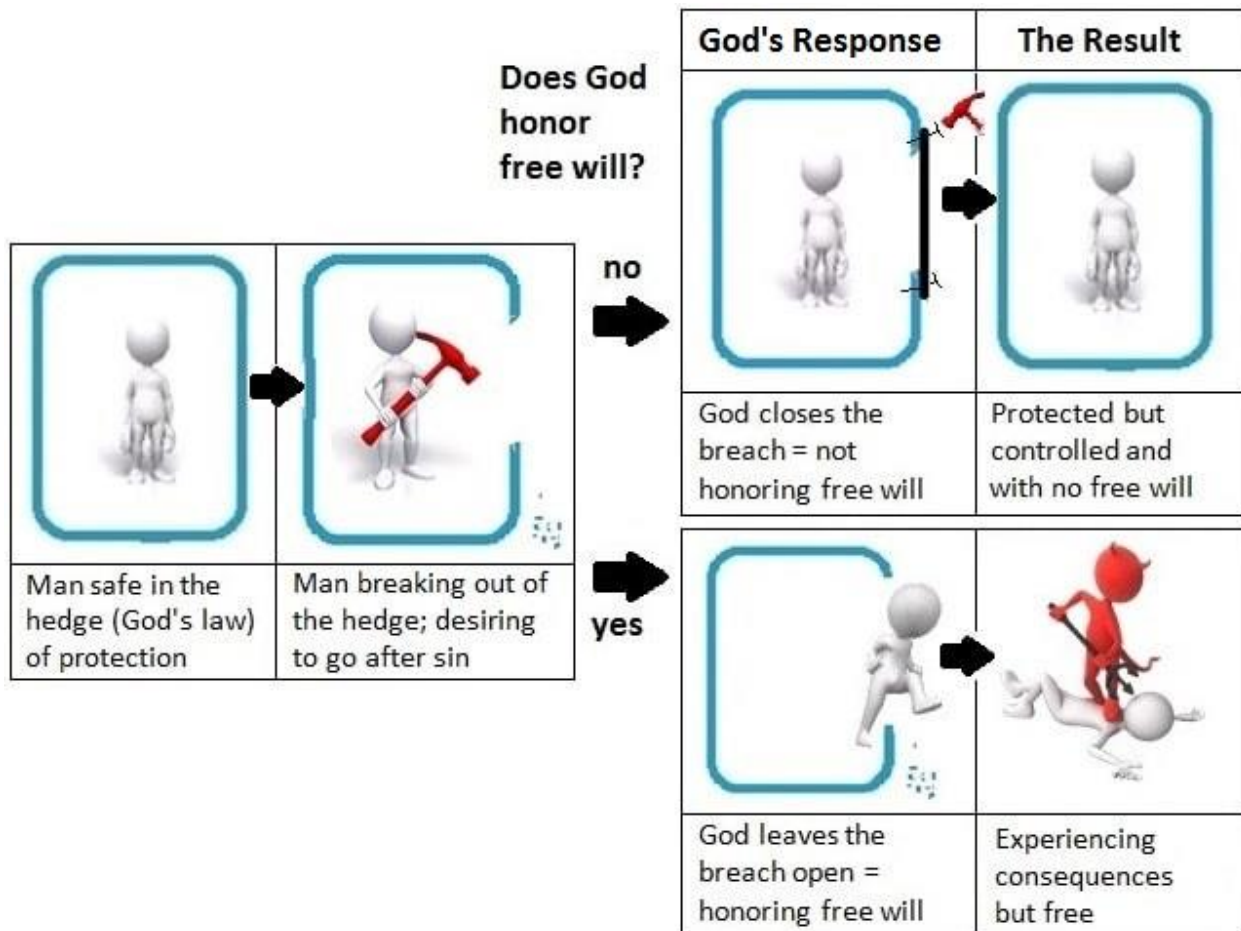
## God Does Not Interfere

Rather than moving towards a person to impose some manifestation of wrath, God, **it seems**, moves away; He takes a hands-off approach. But does He really move away, abandon or forsake? What about verses such as:

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**" (Heb 13:5)

That must mean that He will not forsake them in attitude; the list earlier under "So What Does God Do?" shows many ways in which He has been understood from human perception, to depart physically.

Here is a representation of God honoring free will by allowing free choice and the resulting consequences:



If man seeks to go his own way and God says "**no**" thus preventing him, man might be safely protected but he is controlled and without free will. God honoring and saying "**yes**" to man's

free will potentially exposes him to danger but he has freedom. Which would you rather have? Remember you have free will to choose to abide within God's law. God did not make robots.

## Wrath in Scripture

In the New Testament, wrath (and anger) are most often translated from:

### **3709 orge**

from 3713; TDNT-5:382,716; {See TDNT 560 } n f

AV-wrath 31, anger 3, vengeance 1, indignation 1; 36

- 1) anger, the natural disposition, temper, character
- 2) movement or agitation of the soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but esp. anger
- 3) anger, wrath, indignation
- 4) anger exhibited in punishment, hence used for punishment itself
- 4a) of punishments inflicted by magistrates

The Bible itself defines the word "orge" by its use in Romans chapter 1:

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

If the wrath "is revealed," we should be able see what it looks like. Verses 19-23 describe the ungodliness that is the reason it is revealed. Then verse 24 says specifically what God did:

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves;" (Rom 1:24)

"Wherefore" or "therefore" "God also gave them up" - He let them go the way they had chosen. Verses 25 and 27-28a describe other activities, additional reasons for which "God gave them up" (verse 26) and "God gave them over" (verse 28b).

God honors the free will of men and lets them have the consequences of the choices they have made. This is also seen in the Old Testament:

"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." (Psa 81:11-12)

See [a discussion of this principle](https://characterofgod.org/love-cannot-be-forced/) (sometimes termed Divine Recession).  
(<https://characterofgod.org/love-cannot-be-forced/>)

## Why the Dire Threats?

Some examples of wrath are cases where God verbally "threatened" Israel with what He might do:

"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and **ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them**; And then **the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you**, and **he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain**, and that **the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly** from off the good land which the LORD giveth you." (Deut 11:16-17)

Note that "He shut up the heaven" is not so much Him doing something as it is Him ceasing to do what He normally does:

"... he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt 5:45)

Why would God speak in such threatening language? It is similar to if our children are in danger and will not listen, so that we have to raise our voices and say words that get their attention to warn them:

"The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer. How then can the LORD pasture them like lambs in a meadow?" (Hosea 4:16, NIV)

God would much rather speak in a still, small voice but our spiritual hearing is so dull that He sometimes has to use stronger words and allow troubles to come in attempts to save His children.

## Words Translated as "Anger" or "Wrath"

Each listing includes the Strong's number, the original Hebrew or Greek word, the total number of uses of the original word and each major translation (in the KJV) with its number of occurrences. Cases of anger and wrath or variations of each are emphasized.

### Hebrew

- H599 anaph (14) - **angry** 13, displeased 1
- H639 aph (276) - **anger** 172, **wrath** 42, face 22, nostrils 13, nose 12, **angry** 4
- H2534 chemah (124) - fury 67, **wrath** 34, furious 4, displeasure 3, rage 2, **anger** 1
- H2734 charah (90) - kindled 44, **wroth** 13, hot 10, **angry** 9, displeasure 4, grieved 1
- H2740 charown (41) - fierce 23, fierceness 9, **wrath** 6, fury 1, **wrathful** 1, displeasure 1
- H3707 kawas (54) - **anger** 43, provoked 3, **angry** 2, grieved 1, indignation 1, sorrow 1, vex 1
- H5678 ebrah (34) - **wrath** 31, rage 2, **anger** 1



- H7107 qatsaph (34) - **wroth** 22, **wrath** 5, displeased 3, **angry** 2, **angered** 1, fret 1
- H7110 qetseph (29) - **wrath** 23, indignation 3, sore 2

#### Greek

- G2372 thumos (18) - **wrath** 15, fierceness 2, indignation 1
- G3709 orge (36) - **wrath** 31, **anger** 3, vengeance 1, indignation 1
- G3949 parorgizo (2) - **anger** 1, provoke to **wrath** 1

The large amount of overlap and variation in meaning is apparent.

## The Difference Between God's Wrath and Man's Wrath

With such a variety of original words translated as anger and wrath in so many verses there is, no doubt more we can learn about this topic. It is useful though to compare the differences between God's wrath/anger and man's:

God's Wrath	Man's Wrath
releases	imposes
is consequential	is vindictive
honors free choice	destroys free choice
does not impose presence	moves towards to harm

This verse strongly suggests a difference between the wrath of God and the wrath of man:

"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)

C.S. Lewis has said that at the end of this world there will be but two groups of people: Those who say 'Thy will be done,' And those to whom God will say, 'Thy will be done.' This is the Loving Wrath of God--letting the sinner have his own way.

## Books by the Same Author

This study shows, by looking at the original words, that forgiveness is a two-party transaction. God (the forgiver) forgives every sin, the question is whether or not we (the forgivees) receive that forgiveness. There are actually different Greek words for forgiveness granted and forgiveness received. One is always unconditional while the other is always conditional.

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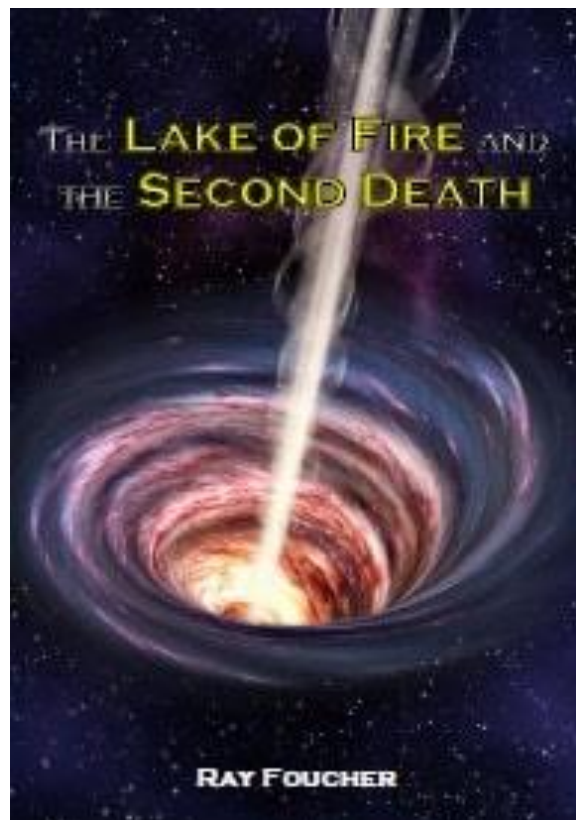
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### Biblical Forgiveness

Are There Two Types?



Ray Foucher



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# In the Heart of the Earth

the Secret Code that Reveals  
What is in the Heart of God

**In the Heart of the Earth** - Just where was this located? The answer, from the Bible itself, is surprising and not what most have understood. The phrase will take on a much greater and personal significance for you.

**He Saw and Believed** - What did John see in the tomb to convince him Jesus had been raised when shortly before he understood grave robbers had been there first? Something unique about the grave clothes he saw in the tomb convinced him of the resurrection.

**His Resurrection on the Lord's Day** - Did the event of Jesus' Resurrection occur on His day - the seventh-day Sabbath (Matthew 12:8)? What are the implications for Sunday sacredness?

**The Heart of the Matter** - How far will God go in allowing us to have the desire of our hearts? Does He always allow us to have our free will? Ponder the most important questions about how the significance of "in the heart of the earth" applies to you personally.

Taking the Word of God as the final authority and using it as its own interpreter, the author explains that there is much more involved in the timing of the resurrection and a correct understanding of Matthew Chapter 12 than has been previously understood.

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