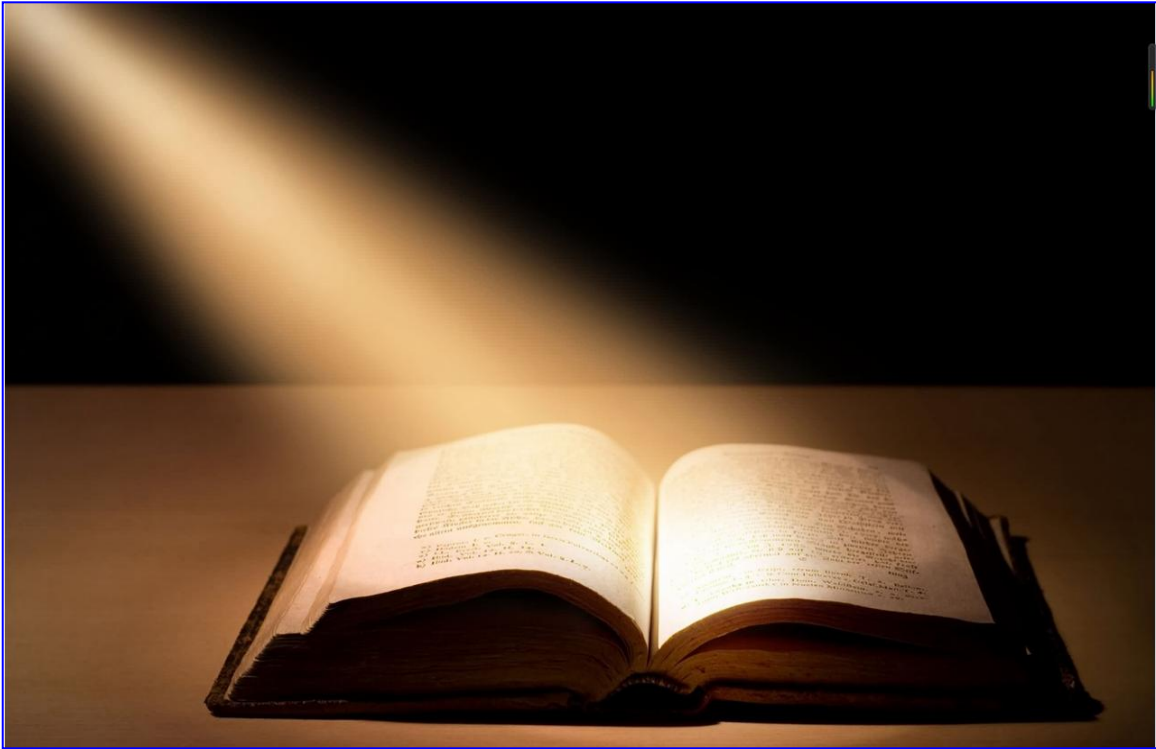


My Favorite Verses

(Volume II ... March 2015 – July 2016)



*... a collection of brief commentaries
on some of the Bible's most beloved
(and least understood) passages,
parables, verses & sayings*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

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An Introduction to what Follows

I think it goes without saying to anyone who has even briefly glanced at the contents of a Bible that it is a marvelous collection of language -- that regardless of one's religious bent (or lack thereof), that the Bible is a tome literally filled with passages that are both mysterious & moving -- that it is a collection of writings literally overflowing with metaphoric drama, symbolic violence, profound wisdom, and good old fashioned common sense ... Of course, it is getting folks to take even that first glance that is often the problem. The vast majority of Christians & Jews refuse to do anything other than cast a cursory look at the Bible; preferring instead to blindly accept the often extremely limited interpretations thereof provided by their preachers & pastors, reverends & rabbis. Just as troubling, the majority of the non-religious (often in response to being "damned to Hell" by the well-intended ignorance of a conservative Christian or two) tend to vehemently discount the contents of the Bible's texts without ever reading any of them for themselves.

For roughly the first 15 years of my life, I belonged to the former group -- condemned by friends and strangers alike as "unworthy"; labeled an ignorant "heathen" by those in my community who ironically were just as misinformed about the contents of the Bible as I myself admittedly was. Then, in direct response to such crystallized callousness, I joined the latter group for the next two decades thereafter -- loudly blasting Christianity (& its Bible) as "ridiculous" & "unethical" & "primitive"; and doing so with the same arrogant, indignant vigor with which its followers had blasted me.

Then one day in 2004, I decided to actually read the Bible for myself ... And lo & behold, once I did so it became flagrantly apparent that "the Good Book" didn't say half the horrible things I had been told it said -- and that even the horrible things it *did* sometimes offer were often mixed in metaphor or swaddled in symbolism. In essence, after almost four decades of living in the rank shadows of its man-made religion, I finally had the humility & the courage to read the Bible for myself --- to discover for myself the brilliantly beautiful and potently pragmatic Truths wrapped within its pages. After having lived so long bridled by hatred for its mythical madness, I was able to set aside all bias & preconception, and I fell madly in Love with what I found thereafter therein.

And ever since, I have been on a mission to reawaken Christians & non-Christians alike to the wonders of its texts. Most Christians I know remain blind followers of a dogma that completely ignores the far greater God of a far greater Love residing within the passages of their own holy tome --- and most non-Christians I encounter still choose to arrogantly discount the same words; and thus remain equally ignorant of the profound & practical psychological truths that rest therein ... What a tragedy!

And so, I decided to periodically share some of the profound Biblical interpretations that I have personally tested to be True; doing so in various shorter books & articles, and also doing so within the loose confines of the shorter commentaries that follow herein ...

May you all enJOY accordingly!

Scaughdt
(March 2015)





“The Bible has noble poetry in it... and some good morals ... and a wealth of obscenity ... and upwards of a thousand lies.” ~ Mark Twain

“The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we truly understand, we will be obliged to act accordingly.” ~ Soeren Kierkegaard

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“The real thing is not a path. The real thing is the authenticity of the seeker. Let me emphasize this. You can travel on any path, and if you are sincere and authentic, you will reach your destination. Some paths may be difficult, some may be more comfortable, some may have greenery on all sides, and some may have you moving through deserts, and yet if you are sincere and honest with the yearnings of your Soul – if you are authentic to the urgings of your conscience – if you are true to the summons of your True Self, then every path will lead you to your goal. So it simply can be reduced to one thing: that authenticity of Soul-Self is the path. And thus the opposite is also true: that no matter what path you choose, if you do not authentically reflect your Soul-Self, then you will not get anywhere. It is your authenticity and your authenticity alone that brings you back home, nothing else matters. Imitation cannot lead you anywhere. Imitation means that the ideal comes from elsewhere, and as such is not happening within you. You have a seed within you; and if you are only imitating others that seed will remain dormant.”

~ anonymous

Matthew 12:24-26 ... Casting out the real “demons”
(03/06/2015)

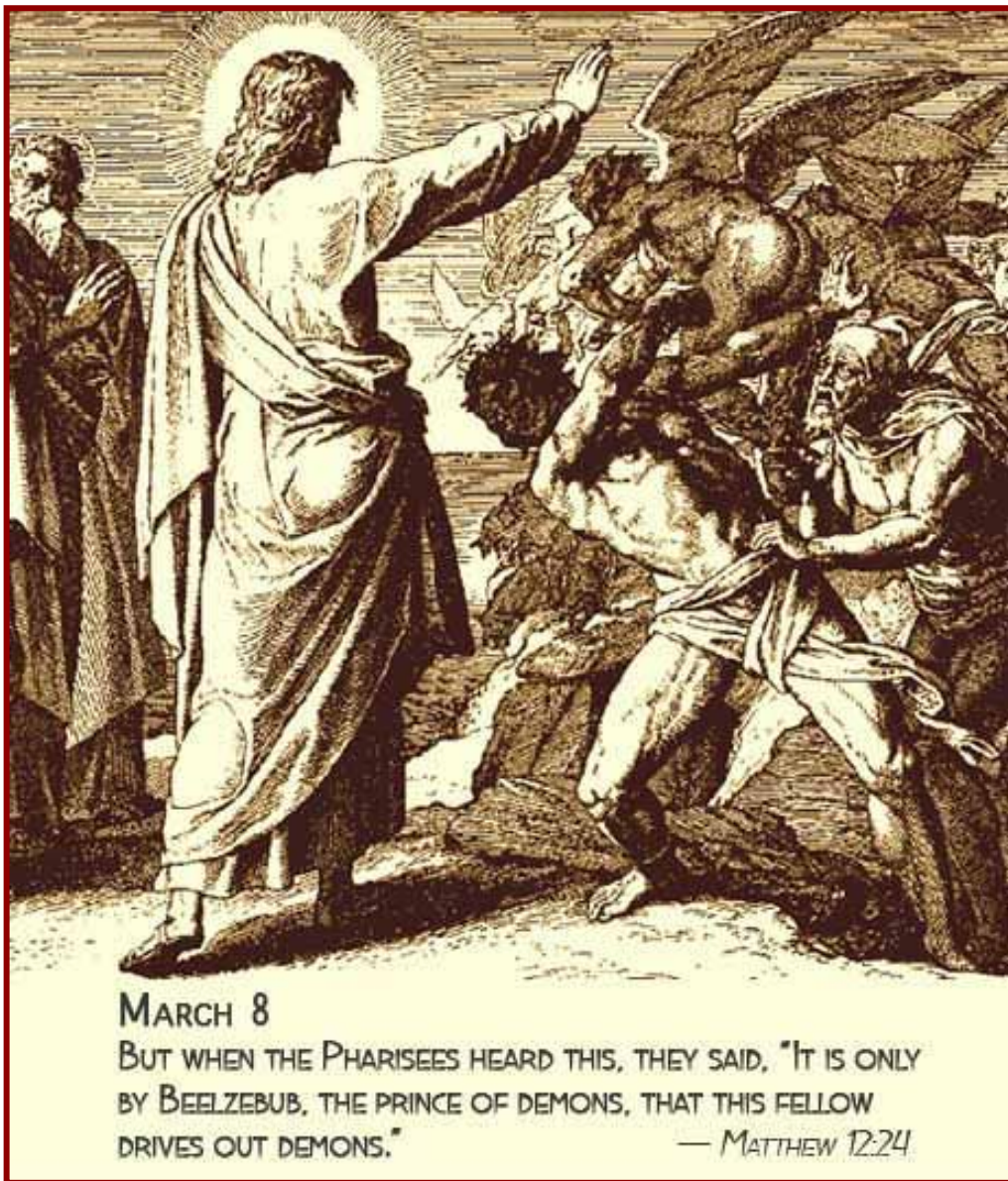
As it turns out, if you happen to have deeply studied the Bible and tested its verses by putting them radically into practice over a number of years -- **and** if you happen to have thereby developed a unique understanding of those verses that happens to contradict what most folks have been taught about what the Bible contains & what it professes -- **and** if you happen to go about engaging conservative Christians in respectful-yet-forthright conversations about these differences, you will invariably at some point be called an “**agent of Satan**”.

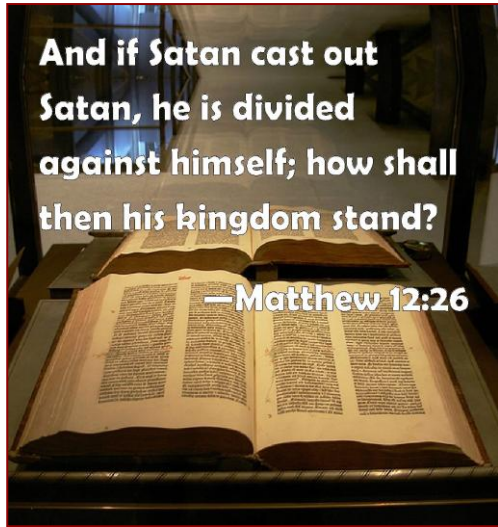
Indeed, as ridiculous as it might sound to some, this has actually happened to me literally dozens of times over the past ten years ... When it happened at first, I was left completely dumbfounded by the blatant audacity required for Christians to make such an outlandishly arrogant (and ridiculously inaccurate) accusation. And yet the more I thought about it from their perspective, the more their insult started to make sense ...

You see, the more staunch a Christian's belief in the traditional, conservative, church-sponsored interpretations of the Bible's texts, the more he or she will be forced to believe that anyone who contradicts that “Word of God” must be in collaboration with the Devil. Their dogma is comfortable to them -- it provides them with the comfortable assurance of being “right” regarding how they should worship God, of being found “worthy” in the eyes of that Lord, and of qualifying as being one of the few who are “saved” as a result. Naturally, then, anyone who contradicts their airtight understanding of the “Word of God” *must* be in allegiance with “the forces of darkness”.



Now, setting aside for the moment the slim possibility that they might indeed be correct about the dysfunctional & not-so-Kind nature of their god, I really do get why they would choose to believe such a thing, and I therefore really do understand why they would therefore choose to label me as “demonic” ... Of course, in a delicious twist of irony, it just so turns out that Jesus Christ -- also like me a public advocate for religious reform -- was accused by the religious authorities of his day of *exactly the same thing!* He openly faced the Sadducees & the Pharisees and the other leaders the Jewish religion of his day, he made essentially the same arguments against the conservative, the capricious & the condemnatory nature of that faith as I am making against Christianity today, and then he too was accused of being an “agent of Satan” (an agent of “Beelzebub”, actually, but the intended meaning was the same).





How intriguing that anyone who champions Light could be accused of being an agent of Darkness; how anyone acting as a messenger of Love could be accused of being an agent of fear; how anyone choosing to glorify a God of perfect Love could be accused of being an accomplice to a Satan embodied (supposedly) of hatred & fear! ... Indeed, how could I be in league with the Devil while spreading the one message that causes his demons to tremble? How could I be an ally of Satan while advocating the very selfless LOVE that causes the Devil to shake and flee?

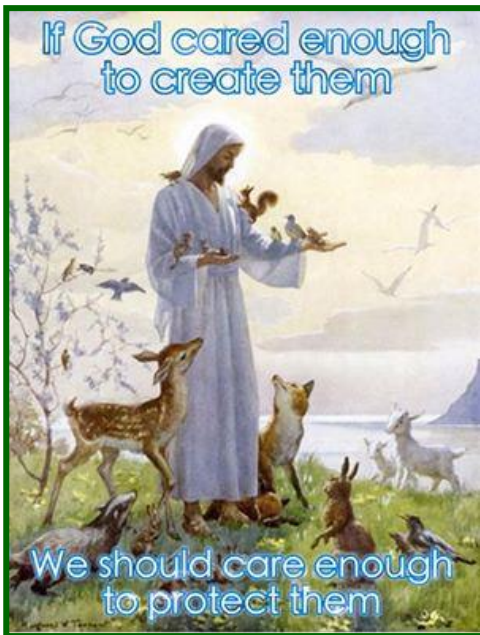
And how ironic it is as well that it is actually those believers accusing me of being in league with evil who are the very ones actually empowering the same; how it is those “good Christians” who accuse me of bringing the darkness who are the very ones making the shadows of judgment & hatred & fear & ignorance grow ever thicker – much to Satan's delight!



Yes, my Friends, I freely admit that my message of joyful self-sacrifice & radical Kindness & Loving our enemies is a most uncomfortable one to enliven. And I fully stipulate that it is a message that does indeed directly contradict many of the more popular (and almost all of the more comforting) tenants of the Paul-inspired Christian-church ... **and yet** a Message of LOVE & LIGHT it remains -- and therefore the bane of Satan & all his evils it remains as well.



*For Satan (to the degree that he actually exists) wants us to believe that our own religion provides the “only way to Heaven” and that God's grace only extends to those who “worship correctly” ... The Way of Christ, on the other hand, encourages us to visualize an almighty God (in whatever form, by whatever name) who cares for **all** His creations regardless of religion, race, gender or species -- and then to act accordingly.



*For Satan wants us to believe that sentient animals are “less than” and to be used & abused at our convenience -- as sacrifices, as food, as clothing, or as entertainment ... The Way of Christ, on the other hand, encourages us to respect *all* sentient life; to live each day intending to cause the least amount of harm and bring the most amount of Joy.

*For Satan wants us to believe that members of ISIS (and all other “terrorists”) are patently evil and that they must be exterminated by violent force -- a “Christian Jihad”, if you will ... The Way of Christ, on the other hand, knows that violence -- no matter how justified we might feel it to be -- only begets more violence; that war only begets more war; that judgment only begets more judgment; that to live by the sword is to die by the sword ... Indeed, while Satan revels in the fact that for every “terrorist” killed at least three more are created, The Way of Christ knows that the only way to attain victory over the Satanic forces of fear is to unconditionally & courageously apply the Godly powers of Love & Compassion & Kindness.



Amen ... Let it be so.

“And when the Pharisees heard [of Jesus healing the deranged], they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out demons.” And Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And indeed, if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?” ~ Matthew 12:24-26

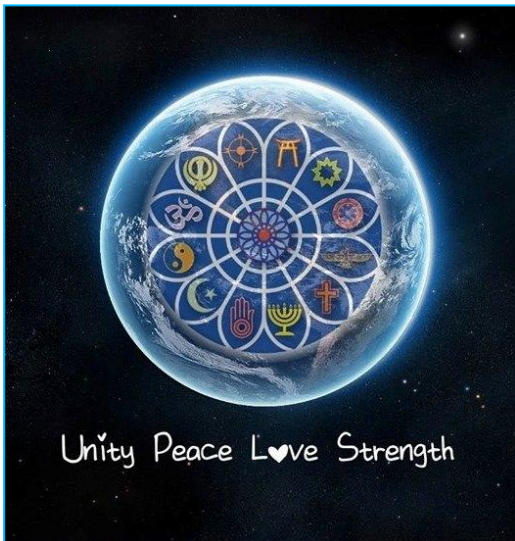
John 8:32 ... bashing the “Christian bashing”
(03/07/2015)

Seeing as how I have a very open, quite alternative, and admittedly somewhat fervent interpretation of the contents of the Bible, and seeing as how I therefore champion a God & a Jesus & a “Heaven” & a “Salvation” that are indeed *very* different from those championed by members of the traditional Christian church, more than a few folks have openly accused me more than a few times of being a “Christian basher” or a “basher” of Christianity itself.

Well, while the former couldn't be further from the Truth, the latter is actually not that far off ... You see, while I consciously & purposefully choose to adore *ALL* my fellow humans (and this, regardless of how intensely their particular religious beliefs happen to conflict with my own), I am also incredibly passionate about encouraging *ALL* of my brothers & sisters to live lives that are fully filled with the purest expressions of Justice & Compassion & Respect & Love ... And because this is indeed the case, and because the entrenched dogmas of *ALL* the world's religions tend to tempt those same brothers & sisters to believe in versions of God (and thereby live versions of life) that are often unjust &/or callous &/or wrathful &/or petty, I have indeed been known to *seemingly* do some serious “religion bashing” in my day.

And it is important to note that I seemingly do so to **all** religions; that even though it might seem as though I “have it in” for Christianity because I mention it much more than all the other faiths combined, I do so NOT because I have a higher contempt for it. No, my Friends, I do so simply because I happen to have been raised in a primarily Christian community and simply because I happen to know quite a bit about the Bible that I wish to courageously share with others.

Simply stated, when it comes to religion (which I do often find to be a particularly dangerous force in the world), I am truly an equal-opportunity “basher” --



Christianity just happens to currently find itself squarely in my “wheel house”, so it gets “bashed” more often as a result ... Of course, such an aggressive boxing metaphor is not really at all accurate, for it is not out of hatred or even “self-defense” that I am often seemingly attacking the Bible (even though more than a few Christians have indeed verbally & spiritually & psychologically “attacked” me more than a few times over the years). For in actuality I am not attacking Christianity at all -- I am simply attempting to *ILLUMINATE* it ... and I am doing so completely & fully from a place of LOVE.

That's right, all you non-Christians out there, I am coming out right here & right now to unequivocally & publicly profess my absolute **ADORATION** for the texts of the Bible, along with my absolute **ADORATION** for how Jesus Christ is portrayed in the Gospels therein ... I have intensely studied the Bible's texts for over ten years now -- their finer nuances & their deeper meanings & their scintillating evolutions -- and I have actively put thousands of different interpretations thereof radically to the test during that same period of time. And as I did so, I continually rediscovered more than few things that I sincerely believe could help Christians & non-Christians alike to live more Power-full, more Peace-full, and thereby more Meaning-full lives ... And so I decided some time ago to start openly sharing all that I have learned.

Now the traditional Christian interpretations of those same Scriptures do indeed often directly contradict my findings, and so it might indeed seem that I am “bashing Christianity” when I share them. And yet it is important to realize that I am not actually bashing the Christian faith when I do so -- as much as I am bashing the theological & dogmatic walls that are keeping so many goodhearted Christians (& goodhearted non-Christians) from appreciating -- and indeed from enlivening -- those deeper Truths.



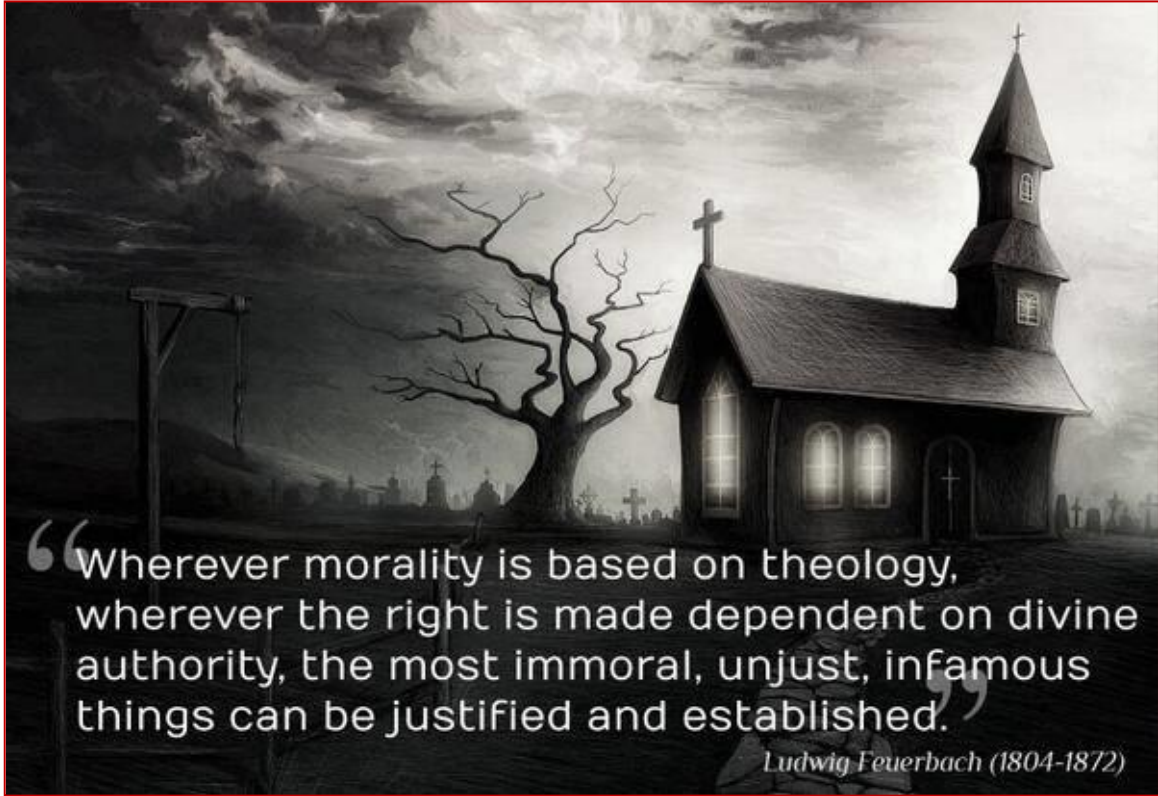
For , my Friends, if we are to ultimately survive as a species -- if we are to one day become the Caring Stewards of the Earth that we were intended to become, then the walls that separate us will simply have to be torn asunder. And the degree to which any religion raises its particular followers up or casts the followers of other religions down is the degree to which that religion is acting as a massive wall keeping humanity from that ultimate Peace & Harmony.

Jesus was right when he told us that “[The Truth will set \[us\] free](#)” (see [John 8:32](#)) ... Of course, what he forgot to remind us in that particular passage is that if the Truth is what sets us free, then all that binds us & all that separates us & all that divides us & all that walls us off from one another -- **is NOT the Truth!**

I see religion's walls, my Friends. I see them still rising strong & dark before us ... And yet I also see that those walls are old & that those walls are weak & that those walls are cracked; that they are ready to be crashed & crumbled; that they are ready to open up before us ...

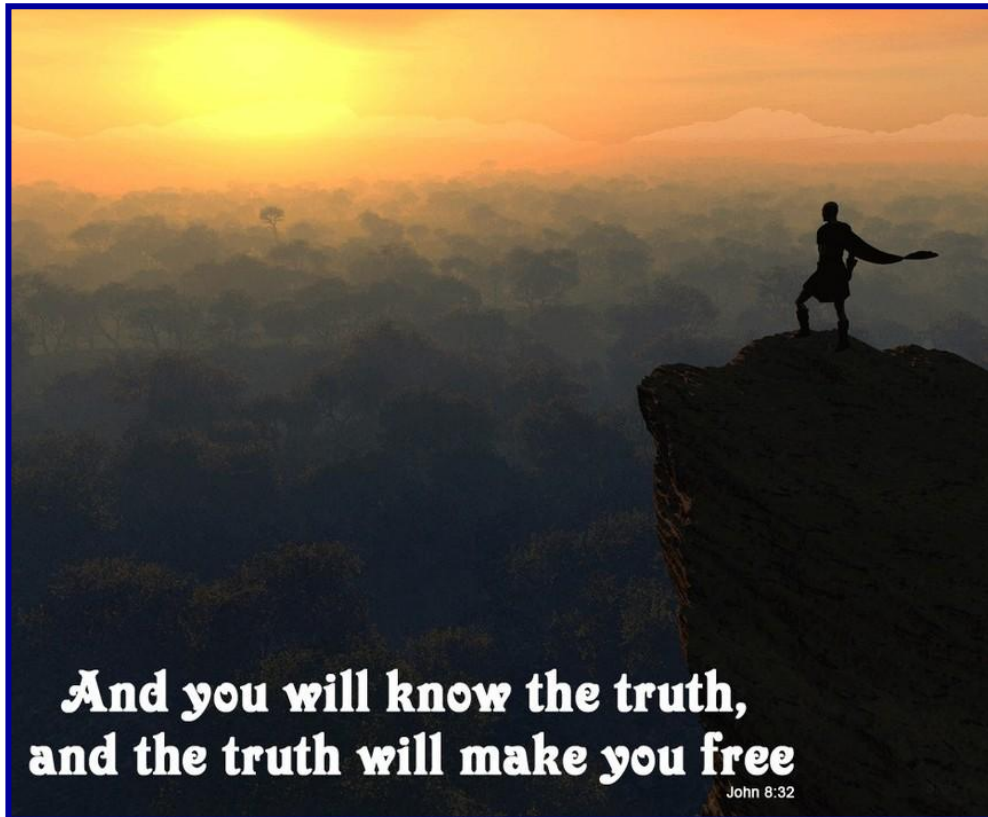
... that they are finally ready to set us free.

Amen ... Let it be so.



“Wherever morality is based on theology, wherever the right is made dependent on divine authority, the most immoral, unjust, infamous things can be justified and established.”

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872)



**And you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free**

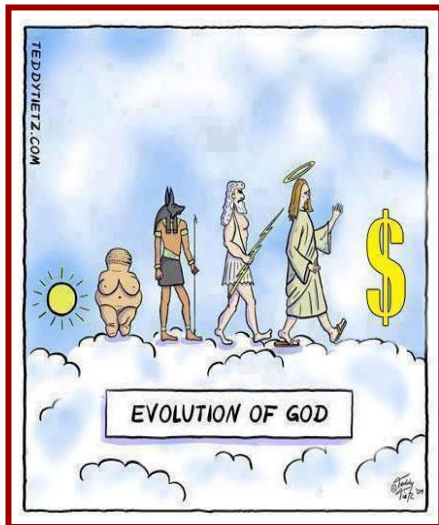
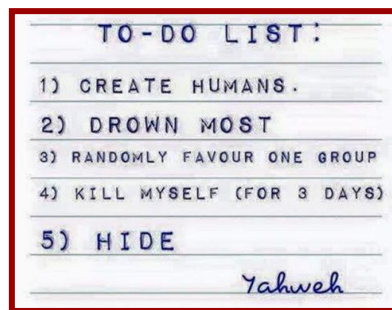
John 8:32

1 John 4:8 ... hating "God" by Loving GOD
(03/08/2015)

In the past it used to bother me quite a bit whenever a person would learn of my "avant garde" take on the Bible (admittedly a take quite different from their more traditional understanding of the same) and then ask me why it was that I hated God. I mean, the raw arrogance of this question used to be enough to get me seething ...

Well I have mellowed quite a bit over the years, and such questions don't really upset me at all anymore. Indeed, I have even reached a level of humility that has allowed me to realize that those folks were right then, and that they are still right today ---- You see, I *do* "hate God", though that admission might be worthy of some explanation ...

For starters, I most certainly *do* despise the capricious "God" of the Bible's Old Testament – the "God" who so frivolously advocated & encouraged genocide, infanticide, mass rape, & mass murder ...



And I also most certainly *do* despise the weak-willed "God" of the current Christian church -- a deity who is supposedly all-Loving & all-powerful, and yet who allows billions & billions of fundamentally innocent Souls (Souls that He made error-prone in the first place) to burn in Hell forever - - all for failing to grovel at His feet in the appropriate manner ... And I also most certainly *do* despise the "God" of modern-day evangelism & the New Age "mysticism" whose preachers & pundits & gurus & "masters" bathe in vast mountains of material wealth that they suck from the trembling poor & the weary downtrodden.

Yes, these versions of "God" -- and all versions like them in all the religions of the world -- truly are despicable imposters; silver-tongued forgeries created by the silver-lipped lusts of men both wicked & corrupt. I have no patience for their greed and I have no patience for their condemnations, and I will continue to call out their hypocrisies and denounce their evils wherever they are found -- and this I will do for the rest of my days.

Of course, this fervent opposition to said “Gods” does not in any way make me an actual GOD-hater -- if for no other reason than these divine imposters have nothing at all to do with GOD.

You see, for me (and for Jesus, and for Buddha, and for Rumi, and for Lao Tsu, and for Kahlil Gibran, and for Gandhi, and for Martin Luther King Jr, and for Peace Pilgrim, and for Kirshnamurti, and for St. Francis) **GOD is LOVE** -- not the “love” of experienced emotion, or the “love” of expressed adoration, or the “love” of publicized worship, but rather LOVE *the verb*; the LOVE of the act of Kindness -- the LOVE of the act of forgiveness -- the LOVE of the act of self-sacrifice ...
... the LOVE of *the act* of LOVE.

As such, even though my interpretations of the Bible's texts are indeed unusual -- even though they are done with LOVE and analyzed through LOVE (and thus have the “gall” to purely reflect real LOVE); just because my opinions & my theories & my practices do not reflect the desires & the wishes & the beliefs of the modern Christian church & its highly limiting dogma, in no way makes me a “hater of God” ... Indeed (and in-deed), I have found that [1 John 4:8](#) is actually *literally* true -- GOD really is LOVE. And as such, to the degree that I choose to live with LOVE, I choose to LOVE GOD as well.

Amen ... Let it be so for you as well.

*“Whoever does not Love does not know God,
for God is LOVE.” ~ 1 John 4:8*



Matthew 5:17-18 ... Belief and the “unbeliever”
(03/09/2015)

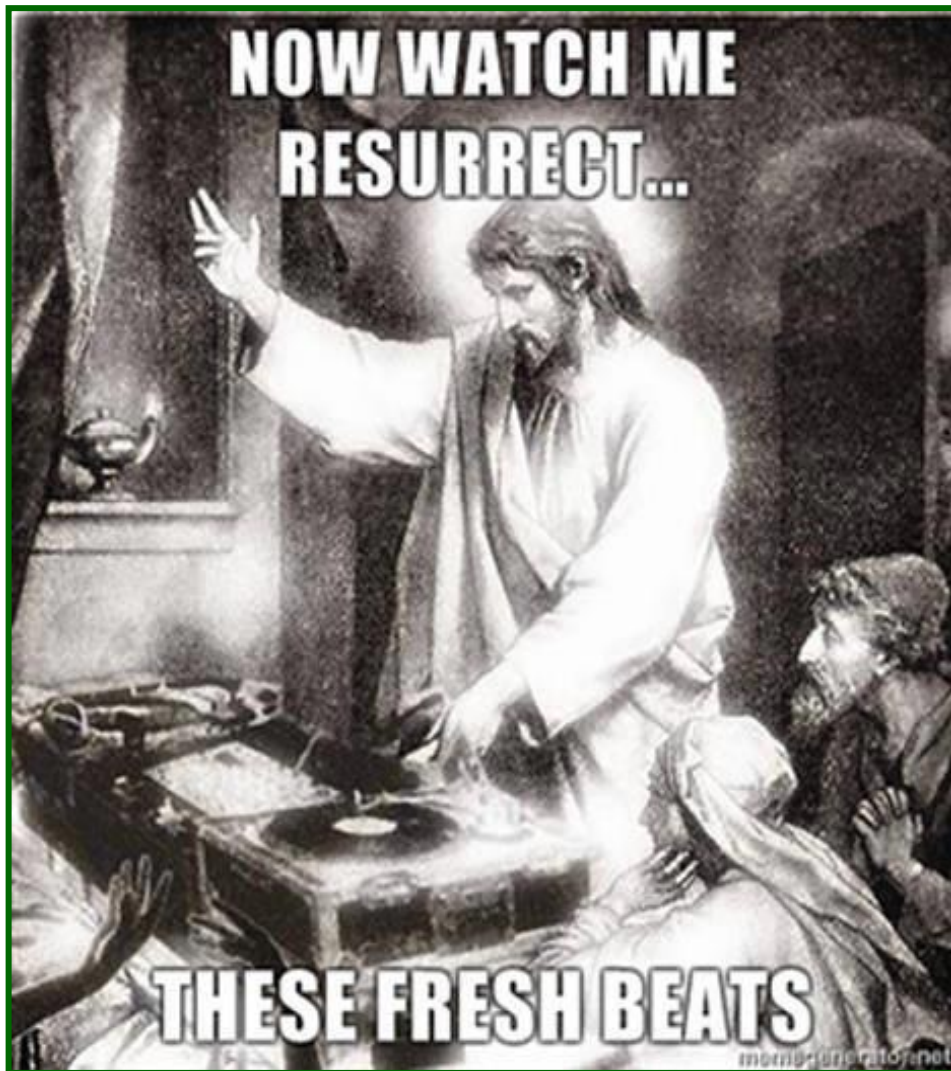
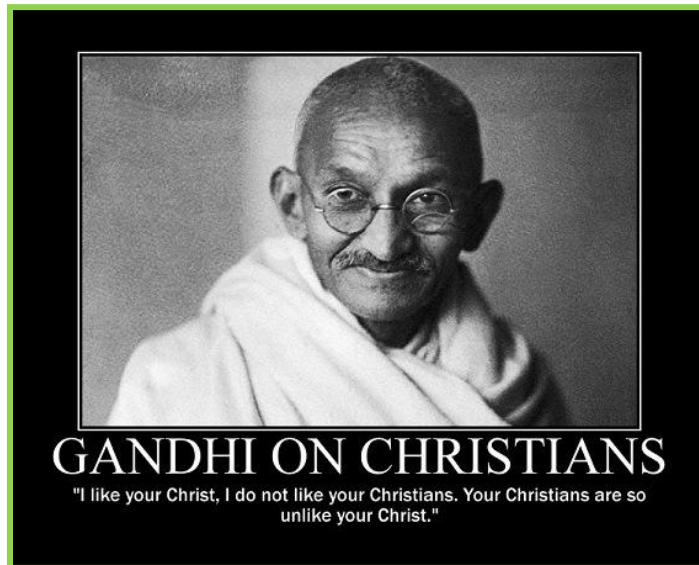
I've always found Christians' use of the term “unbeliever” to be somewhat patronizing (if not a blatant violation of [Matthew 7:1](#)'s call for us to avoid judging others altogether), and yet what I find even more intriguing is that the ones doing this and any similar name-calling seem to have fully forgotten an all-important fact: namely, that their own Lord & Savior was first & foremost an “unbeliever” himself!

Indeed, if we lay out all 613 of the Jewish laws (called “mitzvot”) that were viable in Jesus' day & time, and if we then slowly & Care-fully read Jesus' teachings as they are found in the Gospels, we start to see a most potent Truth take shape – namely, the Truth that Jesus was *not* a supporter of the Old Testament at all. Rather, he was a downright radical reformer thereof ... In fact, of the 613 Old Testament laws that were literally “on the books” during the time of Jesus' three-year ministry, we find in the Gospels themselves that he violated, amended, expanded, or fully discarded EVERY -- SINGLE -- ONE of them! He violated them in the name of Love, and yet violate them he did ... He amended them in the name of Justice, and yet amend them he did ... He expanded them in the name of selfless Service, and yet expand them he did ... He discarded them in the name of Compassion, and yet discard them he did.

And even though the Scribes & the Sadducees & the Pharisees -- even though these most pious and most “holy” and most “learned” religious leaders of his day all openly denounced him as an “unbeliever”, Jesus had the courage to openly challenge the wicked ways in which their laws were being interpreted & the capricious ways in which their laws were being applied ... Yes, even though he was called a “heretic” and a “heathen” -- even though he was openly shunned as an “unbeliever”, Jesus still spoke up for Love & Justice & Compassion anyway.

“But what about [Matthew 5:17-18](#)?” my Christian friends cry. And indeed in that particular passage Jesus does quite clearly say “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them*” ... Of course, what my Christian friends have not been taught is that the Greek word commonly translated as “fulfill” in this verse (*pleroo* - Greek #4137 in Strong's Concordance) is far more accurately written as “honed” or “perfected” or “brought to completion or fullness” ... something that can only be truly fulfilled by the courage of true “unbelievers”.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Matthew 5:17-18 --- Addendum
Jesus as a denouncer &/or a reformer of OT laws
(03/09/2015)

For the casual reader of the Bible, it is readily apparent that the theological principles in the Old Testament differ from those relayed by Jesus in the New Testament. The Old Testament portrays God as a supporter of war (see [Exodus 15:3](#), [Exodus 23:27](#) & [Psalm 137:7-9](#)), while Jesus tells us that “[Blessed are the Peacemakers](#)” ([Matthew 5:9](#)) and that we are to Love our enemies “[for He makes his sun rise on both the evil and the good, and sends rain both to the righteous and the unrighteous](#)” ([Matthew 5:44-47](#) – see also [Luke 6:35-36](#)).

In the Old Testament, God advocates the use of the death penalty ([Exodus 21:12-20](#) & [Exodus 24:16](#) et al), allows for the robbing ([Exodus 12:35-36](#)) and the pillaging ([Numbers 31:9-15](#)) of those defeated in battle, and appears to have effectuated a brutal pogrom during the original Passover (see [Exodus 11:4-6](#)) – and yet Jesus states very clearly that “[God judges no one](#)” ([John 5:22](#) – see also [John 8:15](#), as well as Jesus' Peace-full Passover statements in [Matthew 26:26-28](#)) and that we are to forgive those who trespass against us (see [Luke 17:3-4](#) & [John 8:7](#) et al). In addition, God seems to support the adulteries of Abraham ([Genesis 20:1-18](#)) & Isaac ([Genesis 26:6-11](#)), as well as Moses' lies to the Pharaoh (see [Exodus 5:1](#) & [Exodus 9:27](#)) – and yet Jesus succinctly and simply champions both monogamy ([Matthew 19:6](#)) & always speaking to others with flagrant honesty (see [Matthew 5:37](#), along with his many denouncements of hypocrisy throughout the Gospels).

Such discrepancies have tempted many readers to assume that the two Testaments simply contradict one another in a few important instances. Even Paul succumbed to such hasty thinking (“[Jesus is the end of the Law](#)” ~ [Romans 10:4](#)) ... And yet an in-depth analysis of both the statements & the actions of Jesus in the



Gospels (hereafter, specifically the Gospel of Matthew) shows a significantly different reality: namely, that Jesus' theology consistently and purposefully amplified the spiritual potency of the traditional teachings of Judaism found in the Old Testament – and that it did so in three ways; by limiting them, by radically expanding them &/or by fully discarding them. Feel free to consider the many examples of each on the pages that follow ...

Initially, Jesus **LIMITED** non-functioning Old Testament laws (essentially making them more lenient) ...

*In [Matthew 5:38-41](#) Jesus clearly amends the OT adjudicatory law of “an eye for an eye” (see [Exodus 21:23-24](#), [Leviticus 24:19-20](#) & [Deuteronomy 19:21](#)).

*In [Matthew 6:9-13](#) (The Lord's Prayer) Jesus seems to make obsolete the need for any priestly “divine mediation”.

*In [Matthew 6:14-15](#) Jesus supplants the need to give sin offerings ([Leviticus 4:27](#)), eliminates the need to publicly confess ([Numbers 5:7](#)), and makes needless the regulation requiring the reproofing of sinners ([Leviticus 19:17](#)).



*In [Matthew 8:20](#) Jesus seems to make the placing of a Mezuzah irrelevant ([Deuteronomy 6:9](#)); and likewise the regulation demanding a Jew to reside in a ceremonial hut during the 7 days of Sukkoth ([Leviticus 23:42](#)).

*In [Matthew 8:22](#) Jesus clearly limits the importance of Jewish burial regulations ([Deuteronomy 21:23](#)).

*In [Matthew 9:14-15](#) Jesus generally downplays the need for Jews to adhere to conventions related to fasting.



*In [Matthew 9:20-22](#) Jesus diminishes the potency of OT regulations regarding a woman's uncleanness during menstruation ([Leviticus 15:25-30](#)).

*In [Matthew 10:1](#) Jesus gives non-priests priestly authorities.

*In [Matthew 10:26](#) (which alludes to [Isaiah 45:3](#)) Jesus refers to revealing the Truths purposefully hidden by Jewish elders.

*In [Matthew 11:25](#) Jesus seems to dishonor teachers of the Torah (seemingly prohibited by [Leviticus 19:32](#)).

*In [Matthew 12:1-5](#) (which refers to [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#)) Jesus limits the absoluteness of [Numbers 28:9-10](#).

*In [Matthew 12:9-12](#) Jesus clearly mitigates the OT laws related to observing the Sabbath (see [Exodus 23:12](#) & [Exodus 23:32](#)).

*In [Matthew 12:31](#) Jesus directly diminishes the potency of the OT laws related to blasphemy (see [Deuteronomy 18:20](#) & [21:22](#), [Leviticus 22:32](#), [Exodus 20:6](#) & [Exodus 22:27](#)).

*In [Matthew 13:33](#) Jesus diminishes the general taint placed on yeast by the Old Testament (see [Leviticus 2:11](#)).

*In [Matthew 15:1-6](#) Jesus seems to diminish the importance of [Exodus 30:19](#).

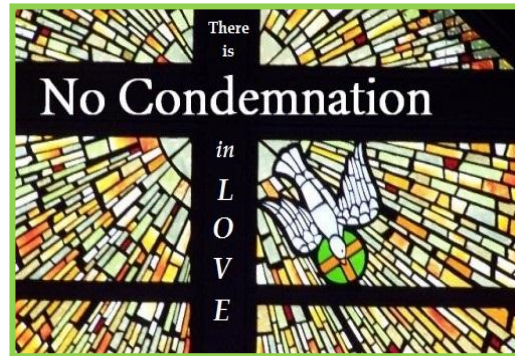
*In [Matthew 15:11](#) Jesus limits the severity of all Old Testament food regulations (see [Leviticus, chapter 11](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 15:21-28](#) Jesus over-rides the Old Testament law demanding enmity with all those from the land of Canaan (see [Deuteronomy 20:17](#)).

*In [Matthew 16:6-12](#) Jesus generally encourages a lessened respect for “[the yeast of the Pharisees](#)”.

*In [Matthew 19:29](#) Jesus indirectly encourages a violation of the Commandment to honor one's mother & father (see [Exodus 20:12](#), [Exodus 21:17](#) & [Leviticus 19:3](#)).

*In [Matthew 22:24-30](#) Jesus diminishes the sacredness of [Deuteronomy 25:5](#).



*In [Matthew 22:31-32](#) Jesus denounces the resurrection from the dead(!) – a common Pharisaic belief at the time.

*In [Matthew 23:9](#) Jesus' words could be construed to encourage the dishonoring of one's father (see [Exodus 20:12](#), [Exodus 21:17](#), [Deuteronomy 5:16](#) & [Leviticus 20:9](#)).

*In [Matthew 23:16-22](#) Jesus seems to contravene the Commandment to swear by God's name (see [Deuteronomy 10:20](#)).

*In [Matthew 24:2](#) Jesus generally shows open disrespect for the Temple (see [Leviticus 19:30](#)).

*In [Matthew 25:14-30](#) Jesus is an inverse criticism (see [verse 26](#)) of the Old Testament regulation prohibiting lending with interest (see [Leviticus 25:37](#) & [Deuteronomy 23:20](#)).

Additionally, Jesus **EXPANDED** Old Testament laws (essentially making them more absolute than tradition demanded) ...

*In [Matthew 5:13](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament law requiring that all sacrifices be salted (see [Leviticus 2:13](#)).



*In [Matthew 5:21-22a](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament law stating “do not murder” (see [Exodus 20:13](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:17](#)).

*In [Matthew 5:22b](#) Jesus expands the OT law “do not slander” ([Leviticus 25:17](#)).

*In [Matthew 5:27-28](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament law prohibiting adultery ([Exodus 20:14](#), [Deuteronomy 5:18](#) & [Leviticus 18:20](#)).

*In [Matthew 5:31-32](#) & [Matthew 19:3-9](#) Jesus radicalizes the OT law related to divorce ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)) ... [Note here that the phrase “except on grounds of unchastity” is *absent* from the parallel verses of [Mark 10:11-12](#) & [Luke 16:18](#)]

*In [Matthew 5:33-37](#) Jesus expands the OT laws related to swearing (see [Leviticus 19:12](#), [Numbers 30:2-3](#), [Deuteronomy 23:2+24](#) & [Deuteronomy 10:20](#)).

*In [Matthew 5:43-44](#) Jesus radically expands the implications of the Old Testament requirement to “love your neighbor” ([Leviticus 19:18](#); doing so in harmony with the intent of [Exodus 23:4-5](#)).

*In [Matthew 5:48](#) Jesus expands the OT laws of [Deuteronomy 18:13](#) & [Leviticus 19:2](#) – turning fearful obedience to God into loving homage for Him.

*In [Matthew 6:1-4](#) Jesus expands the OT laws related to charity (see [Exodus 23:19](#), [Deuteronomy 18:4](#) & [18:26](#)).



*In [Matthew 6:5-8](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament laws related to worship & prayer (see [Exodus 23:25](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 7:15-20](#) Jesus expands the OT laws regarding false prophets ([Deuteronomy 18:20-22](#) – simultaneously harmonizing them with [Deuteronomy 13:4](#)).

*In [Matthew 7:21-23](#) Jesus expands Jewish worship in general; from mere mental obedience to open and active Love (see [Leviticus 22:32](#) & [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) – both in harmony with [Deuteronomy 28:9](#)).

*In [Matthew 9:2-6](#) Jesus expands the oral law espousing that only God could forgive sins (see [Mishna Yom 8:9](#)).



*In [Matthew 12:35-37](#) Jesus makes absolute the Old Testament law about giving false testimony (see [Exodus 20:13](#)).

*In [Matthew 12:48-50](#) & [Matthew 15:1-6](#) Jesus intensifies the Old Testament law requiring the honoring of one's mother & father (see [Exodus 20:12](#), [Exodus 21:17](#), [Deuteronomy 5:16](#) & [Leviticus 19:3](#)).

*In [Matthew 18:1-5](#) Jesus radically expands the Old Testament law requiring the honoring of one's elders (see [Leviticus 19:32](#)).

*In [Matthew 18:6-7](#) Jesus intensifies the implications of [Leviticus 19:14](#).

*In [Matthew 18:8-9](#) Jesus makes a radical commentary on the Old Testament laws related to amputation (see [Deuteronomy 25:11-12](#) & [Ezekiel 23:25](#)).



*In [Matthew 18:23-25](#) Jesus seems to reflect the Old Testament law forbidding making interest-bearing loans to the poor (see [Exodus 22:25](#)).

*In [Matthew 19:5](#) Jesus intensifies the laws regarding marriage (see [Genesis 2:24](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 19:11-12](#) Jesus radically comments on the OT laws related to sexual intercourse (see [Deuteronomy 23:18](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 19:16-21](#) Jesus intensifies the absoluteness of the 10 Commandments (see [Exodus 20:12-16](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:16-20](#)), makes unconditional the law to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)), and expands the law requiring the giving to those in need (see [Deuteronomy 15:7-8](#)).

*In [Matthew 20:1-16](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament regulations regarding the payment of workers (see [Deuteronomy 24:15](#) & [Leviticus 19:13](#)).

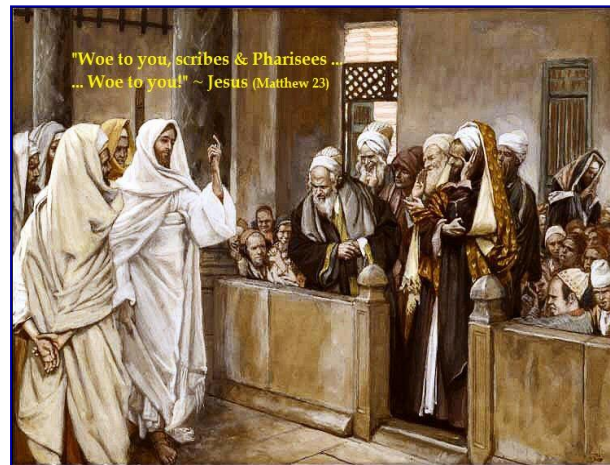
*In [Matthew 20:24-28](#) Jesus intensifies the Commandment to not covet (see [Exodus 20:14](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:18](#)).

*In [Matthew 21:28-32](#) Jesus expands the Old Testament laws related to the upholding of oaths (see [Deuteronomy 23:24](#) & [Numbers 30:3](#)).

*In [Matthew 21:40-43](#) Jesus indirectly expands the implications of Old Testament mercy-laws (see [Numbers 35:12](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 22:37-40](#) Jesus radically inverts the potency of the 10 Commandments (see [Exodus 20:6-12](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:16-20](#)) by expanding the power of the Shema ([Deuteronomy 6:5-7](#) & [Exodus 30:6](#)) & dramatically intensifying the implications “Love your neighbor” ([Leviticus 19:18](#)).

*In [Matthew 23:13-26](#) Jesus radically expands the Old Testament call to merely learn the Torah ([Deuteronomy 6:7](#)), while simultaneously making a commentary on the Old Testament prohibition against oppressing the weak ([Exodus 21:22](#)).



*In [Matthew 23:23-24](#) Jesus intensifies the Old Testament regulations related to tithing (see [Exodus 23:19](#), [Deuteronomy 18:4+26](#), [Leviticus 27:30](#) & [Numbers 18:24](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 26:2](#) Jesus inverts the overall ramifications of the Passover observance (contrast with [Exodus 12:1-10](#)).

*In [Matthew 26:6-13](#) Jesus makes a radical commentary of the Old Testament law related to anointings (see [Exodus 30:32](#)).

*In [Matthew 26:26-29](#) Jesus amends the Old Testament law requiring that thanks be given to God *after* a meal (see [Deuteronomy 8:10](#)).



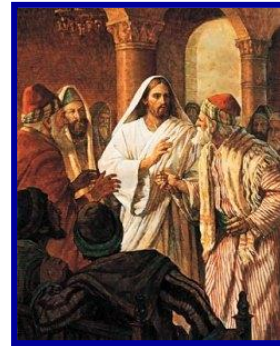
Finally, Jesus actually **DISCARDED** many non-functioning Old Testament laws (by negating them verbally or violating them actively) ...

*In [Matthew 5:40](#) Jesus alludes to a potential violation of the OT law against keeping another's cloak overnight (see [Exodus 22:26-27](#) & [Deuteronomy 24:12-13](#)), as well as the OT law against denuding one of close kin ([Leviticus 18:6](#))

*In [Matthew 6:16-18](#) (suffering silently) Jesus seemingly negates the OT law commanding a Jew to cry out to God when in need ([Numbers 10:9](#)).

*In [Matthew 6:25-26](#) & [Matthew 26:31-33](#) Jesus seems to make irrelevant the OT regulations regarding food (see [Leviticus chapter 11](#) & [Deuteronomy chapter 14](#)).

*In [Matthew 6:25+28-33](#) Jesus seems to encourage the violation of OT laws regarding clothing (see [Deuteronomy 6:8](#) & [Deuteronomy 22:5-11](#) -- **Note** as well the effect of [Matthew 23:5](#) on [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) & [Numbers 15:38-40](#)).



*In [Matthew 7:28-29](#) (teaching with priestly authority) Jesus seems to “fly in the face” of the Old Testament regulations found in [Leviticus chapter 21](#).

*In [Matthew 8:3](#) Jesus violates the Old Testament laws related to lepers ([Leviticus 13:44-45](#) & [Numbers 5:1-4](#)).

*In [Matthew 9:12-13](#) & [Matthew 12:7](#) Jesus seems to negate the Old Testament regulations regarding Temple sacrifices (see [Numbers 28:3](#), [Exodus 30:7-9](#), [Exodus 12:6-10](#) & [Exodus 13:2](#)).

*In [Matthew 9:25](#) Jesus seems to violate the Old Testament law against touching the dead (see [Deuteronomy 18:11](#) – see also Jesus raising Lazarus on his *fourth day* in the tomb in [John 11:17-44](#)).



*In [Matthew 11:19](#) Jesus alludes to a violation of the Old Testament law against gluttony (see [Leviticus 19:26](#)), as well as the Law prohibiting associating with sinners (see [Deuteronomy 10:20](#)).

*In [Matthew 11:20-24](#) Jesus seems to violate the edicts of [Leviticus 19:16-18](#).

*In [Matthew 12:1](#) Jesus seems to negate the Old Testament law regarding the Sabbath (see [Exodus 16:29](#)).

*In [Matthew 12:48-49](#) Jesus seems to violate the Old Testament law prohibiting one from being a “[rebellious son](#)” (see [Deuteronomy 21:18](#)).

*In [Matthew 17:24-27](#) Jesus seems to negate Old Testament regulations related to taxation (see [Exodus 30:13](#)).

*In [Matthew 18:22](#) Jesus reverses the symbolic meaning of the highly unusual “[seventy times seven](#)”; a number found elsewhere in the Bible only in [Genesis 4:24](#).

*In [Matthew 19:10](#) Jesus seems to neutralize the Old Testament laws regarding marriage (see [Genesis 1:28](#), [Deuteronomy 7:3](#) & [Deuteronomy 22:13](#)).

*In [Matthew 21:9](#) Jesus seems to challenge the Old Testament regulations against idol-worship (see [Deuteronomy 7](#), [Deuteronomy 12:2](#), [Deuteronomy 13:12-14](#), [Exodus 20:4-5](#), [Exodus 23:13+23](#) et al).

*In [Matthew 21:12-13](#) Jesus portrays a violation of [Deuteronomy 12:4](#) (do not destroy objects associated with God) and [Leviticus 19:30](#) (revere the Temple).

*In [Matthew 21:18-19](#) Jesus reflects a violation of the Old Testament regulation against the killing of fruit trees (see [Deuteronomy 20:19](#)).

*In [Matthew 26:28](#) Jesus clearly offends the intent behind the Old Testament law prohibiting the eating of blood (see [Leviticus 3:17](#)).

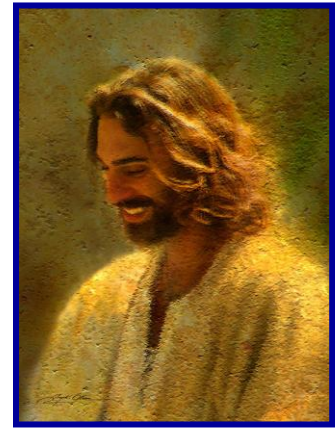


In addition, while Jesus' teachings often made mention of the intellectual hypocrisies of the religious leaders of his day, those leaders' treatment of Jesus was in and of itself hypocritical ... Where the Old Testament demanded that Love be shown to one's fellow Jews ([Leviticus 19:17-18](#)), the priests and Pharisees showed an open hatred for Jesus ... Where the Old Testament demanded that Jewish courts levied death sentences on the accused ([Deuteronomy 21:22](#)), the High Priests had Pontius Pilate do that work for them ... Where the Old Testament banned the infliction of punishment on the Sabbath ([Exodus 35:3](#)), Jesus' condemners intended for his crucifixion to extend at least through that very day.

With these references in mind, Jesus' more general rejections of the Jewish Old Testament laws can be seen for what they really were intended to be: *a call to radical reform* and a call to make the laws both more accessible and more spiritually potent for the everyday Jewish worshiper.

*Where the Old Testament seemed to demand priestly mediation to communicate with God, Jesus noted that “for all who knock, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-11).

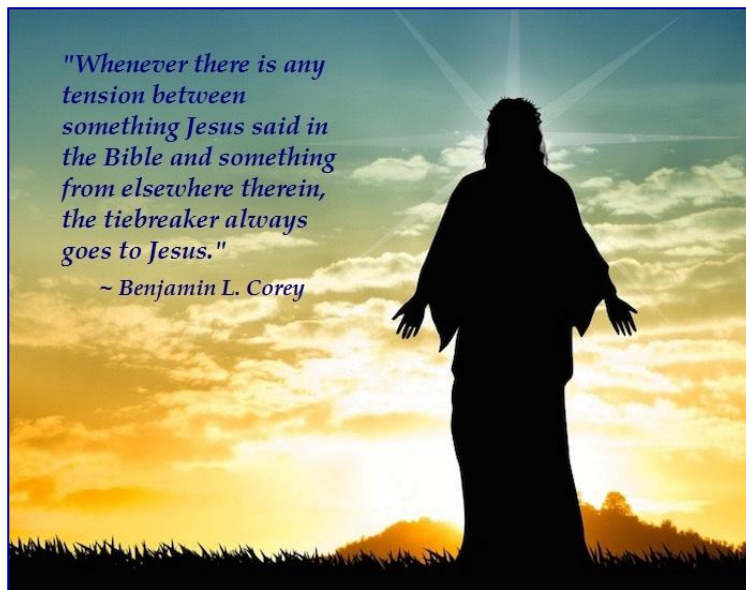
*Where the Old Testament laws are to be inflexibly obeyed, Jesus noted that “new wine is not put into old wineskins” (Matthew 9:16-17) and that “every scribe prepared for the Kingdom of Heaven brings out of his treasure both what is old and what is new” (Matthew 13:52).



*Where the religious leaders of the day looked to the Pharisees as religious role-models, Jesus noted that true worship has nothing to do with such piousness – that we are to “do whatever they teach, but not to do as they do” (Matthew 23:2-3), and that we like they should “clean first the inside of our cup so that the outside might thereafter become clean” (Matthew 23:25-28).

*Finally, where the Old Testament regulations kept the people and God separate from one another, the willingly self-sacrificial Way of Jesus' ministry served to “rend the curtain” between God and humankind (Matthew 27:51) – which the text of the Gospels clearly (albeit subtly) show was Jesus' ultimate intention.

Amen ... Let it be so for us all!

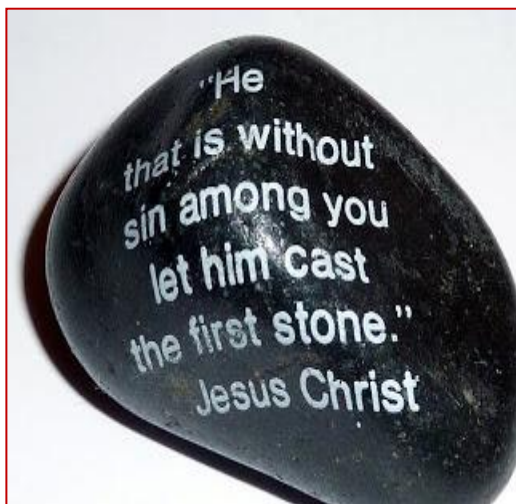


John 8:7-11 ... Denouncing “sin” & “sinner”
(03/10/2015)

As far as I am concerned, people are allowed to label me & judge me & criticize me & even insult me however they wish. My job is simply to keep Loving everyone in my life -- especially my critics -- while continuing to openly & courageously share my message of the Peace & the Harmony & the Bliss that come from every act of pure Forgiveness, every act of selfless Kindness &/or every act of unconditional Love ... In essence, I **CARE** about all people (all beings, actually) without caring even one little bit about what those people think about me or about my mission or about my message. Indeed, this is the only mentality -- the only form of “compassionate detachment” -- that allows me to truly LOVE others at all.

That having been said, when misconceptions start to build up in frequency or intensity -- and thereby prevent certain people from hearing the wonderful Truths I have to offer, it *can* be a service to calmly shatter those delusions. And now we have once again come to one of those times, and as such it is once again time for me to concisely “set the record straight” – this time about “sin” & “sinning” ...

First and foremost, the word commonly translated as “sin” in English Bibles is most often the Greek word *hamartano* (Greek #264 in Strong's Concordance) ... And quite contrary to popular belief, this word does **NOT** mean “bad” or “wrong” or “evil” at all. It simple means “*missed the mark*” -- it simply means that a “sinner” is one who has made a mistake; that he or she has chosen to behave in a way that does not reflect the truly Caring Self they truly are. We humans -- each & every one of us -- are actually programmed to “sin”. Each and every one of us have brains that always react with self-centered fear before even giving us a chance to choose selfless LOVE. As such, we are all – each & every one of us -- “sinning” pretty much all the time.



It is a “sin” to look the other way when a homeless man asks us for change ... It is a “sin” to gossip about a classmate or a co-worker who is getting on our nerves ... It is a “sin” to condemn Republicans for their callous greed or Democrats for their hypocritical war-lust ... It is a “sin” to label the delusional &/or furious fighters of ISIS as “evil” and demand their extermination ... And it is a “sin” to call anyone else a “sinner”. Indeed, in every moment we react with anger or fear or sadness or selfishness to any person, in any circumstance or in any situation, we have indeed “sinned”.

And yet this is **NOT** what defines us, my Friends. What defines us as humans -- what separates the mere mundane homosapien from the glorious Human Being -- is what we do immediately after we slip into “sin”.

*Do we rationalize not speaking gently with the homeless man because he could be “dangerous”, or do we go back to him and show him Kindness?

*Do we justify gossiping about that classmate or co-worker because they are “mean” or a “liar” or “stupid”, or do we forgive them by giving them an “undeserved” compliment or an “unmerited” gesture of Love?

*Do we publicly defend our attacks on political opponents or opposing political philosophies, or do we disengage from such useless conflicts and start repairing our communities ourselves?

*Do we openly condemn “terrorists” and call for their extermination, or do we have the wherewithal to forgive them even while we reject their methods -- do we have the wherewithal to denounce their violence while fully realizing that they too are acting from a similar place of deep-seated fear & hurt & anger?

*And finally, do we maintain our arrogant incorrectness by labeling others as “sinners” -- by rejecting their beliefs as “wrong” &/or denouncing their lifestyles as “less worthy” ... or do we choose to humble ourselves despite our reasonable disagreements and extend to them deeds of gentle Kindness anyway?

Yes, it is true that we are all “sinners”, my Friends -- **and yet** this truth is completely irrelevant. Indeed, it is not at all important to realize that you have “sinned” or that you are a “sinner” -- it is only important what you DO FOR OTHERS after realizing the same.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“And as they kept questioning him, Jesus straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone who is without sin cast the first stone.' ... And when they heard this, they were ashamed and went away one by one ... And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him ... and he said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Who is left to condemn you?’ And she answered, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus smiled at her and said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and sin no more.” ~ John 8:7-11

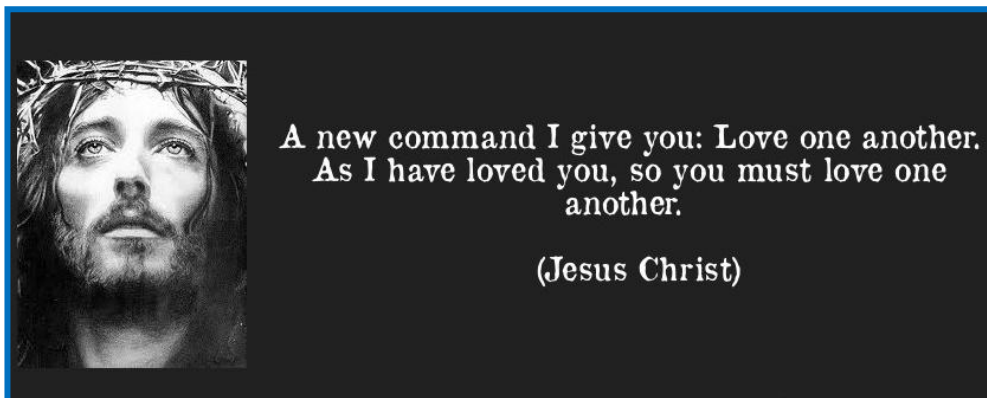


Jeremiah 31:31-34 ... Down with Dictators
(04/04/2015)

Tyranny comes in many forms. It dons the dark helmet of political oppression, it arrogantly struts the financial armor of the wealthy who are “in power”, and it wields the smiting sword of fundamentalist religious dogma.

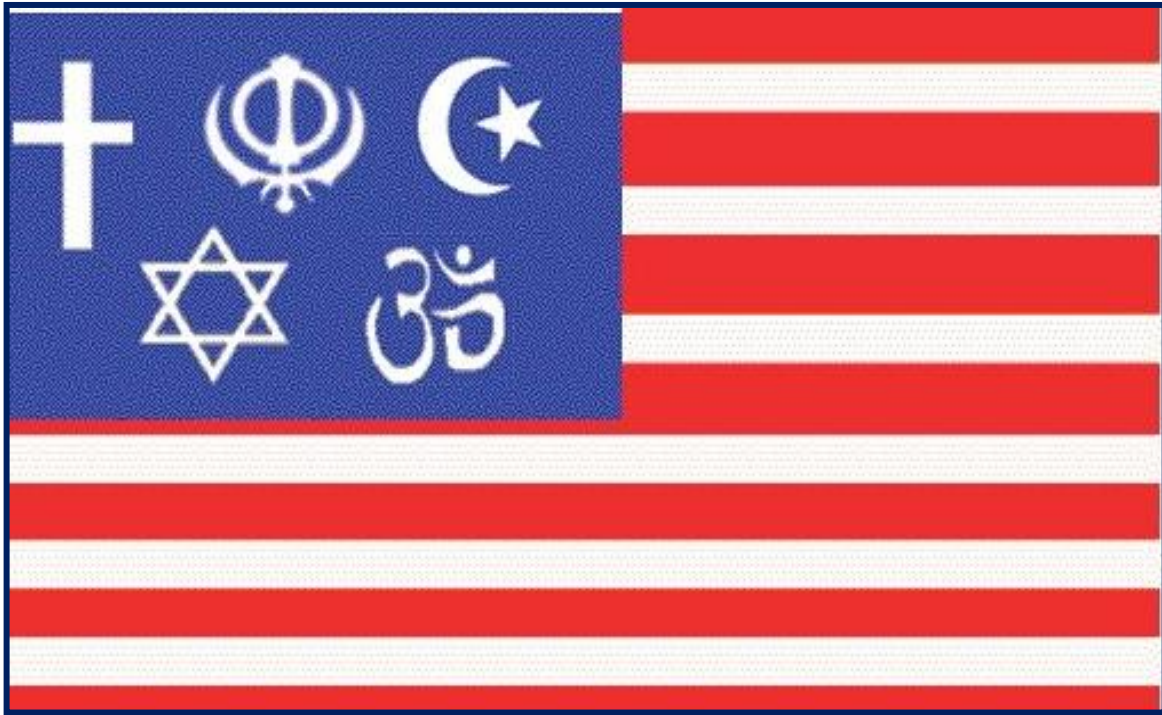


And yet, even though these despots & dictators & deacons have indeed infiltrated almost every corner of our lives, freedom from their taloned grasp is not beyond our means ... For to LOVE others openly & actively & unconditionally -- *all* of them -- is the only Way to be truly Free. And without your consent, this LOVE cannot ever be fully shackled ... Without your compliance, the giving of this LOVE cannot ever be even partially denied.



So refuse to give in to your tyrants' calls to anger, fear and hopelessness. Especially in those moments when you are tempted to passively judge or cower in silence or lash out in anger, choose to be FREE ...

Choose to **LOVE anyway!**



*“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ... It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt ... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days: I will put my law **within them**, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest; for **I will forgive their iniquity**, and I will remember their sin no more.’”*

~ Jeremiah 31:31-34

Romans 10:10 ... To be truly Saved (04/12/2015)

“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved ... Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -- you and your household.” ~ Paul (Romans 10:10 + Acts 16:31)

God bless that “apostle” Paul ... He tried so hard to do the right thing; of that I am almost sure. Suffering from an immense weight of guilt over persecuting the original adherents of Jesus' teachings (known then as “Followers of The Way” – see [Acts 9:2](#) & [Acts 11:26](#) & [Acts 22:4](#)) and burdened by possibly the lowest self-esteem of all the prophets in human history, he was earnestly desperate to make good on his past failings and to make up for his past misdeeds. The only problem was, he had never seen Jesus in the flesh and he had never himself heard Jesus teach.

So what did he do? Well, the next best thing: He simply made stuff up, and then attached Jesus' name to it! Granted, it was “good stuff” -- at least if you happened to agree with it -- **and yet** the fact remains that it was certainly NOT Jesus' stuff. Where Jesus proclaimed a Heaven that was & remains Here&Now (see [Luke 17:20-21](#), along with all of his parables), Paul shouted of a paradise post-mortem ... Where Jesus proclaimed that God's LOVE was perfectly unconditional and that His forgiveness knows no limit (see [Matthew 5:40-48](#) + [Matthew 18:22](#) et al), Paul spoke of a God who only gave the same to the “worthy” few ... And where Jesus proclaimed a Salvation through deeds of selfless Kindness (especially those done for strangers, for the downtrodden, &/or for one's enemies -- see [John 13:15-17](#)), Paul's redemption could only come from bowing down to Jesus himself in thought &/or from worshiping Jesus himself by word or song.

And what happened next is well known to all -- Paul's teachings became the foundation of the now extremely complicated & patently condemnatory dogma of the modern-day Christian church, while Jesus' Way of selfless & humble LOVE has all but disappeared from the Christian landscape.

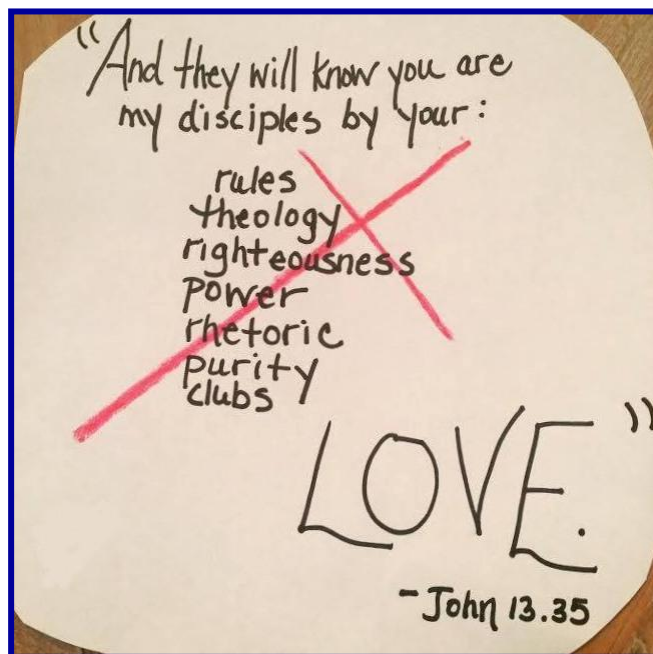


Of course, you can & will believe whatever you wish ... and I publicly admit that I most certainly do not have *the* answers, that I most certainly lay no claim to *the* Truth; and that I most certainly will not Love any of you one bit less for choosing to follow the theology of Paul instead of the teachings of Christ.

That having been said, I *will* gently remind each of you that the Salvation of Jesus is waiting for you -- right here & right now, and that this is true regardless of your particular religious inclinations (or even complete lack thereof) ... And I will also softly remind you that entry into the sheer Bliss of this “Kingdom of Heaven” cannot be attained by “believing with your heart” or by “professing with your mouth”. Indeed, it doesn't matter one bit how deep your feelings are or how passionate your faith is or how earnest your words of praise might be -- for the Heaven of Jesus Christ can only be entered by first setting aside all your pride & all your hubris, by then looking intensely & earnestly for someone nearby who is suffering from pain or worry or indecision or sadness, and then by reaching out to those downtrodden with openly radical acts of Kindness & Caring.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“And because iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold. But those that endure unto the end [in Love] shall be saved. And THIS Gospel of the Kingdom shall be shared with all the people and unto all nations ... Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing ... If you follow my teachings, you are truly my disciples ... And by this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you show LOVE for one another ... If you truly Love me, then keep my Commandments ... And this is my Commandment: Love one another just as I have Loved you.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:12-14, John 14:12, John 8:31, John 13:35, John 14:15 & John 15:12)



1 Corinthians 13:11 ... When I was a child (04/13/2015)

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to my childish ways.”

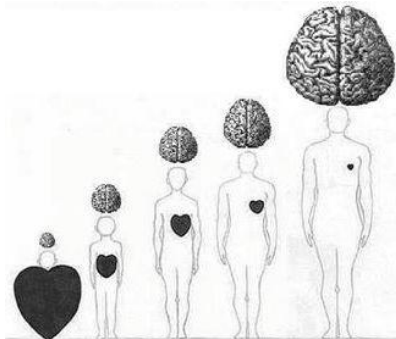
~ Paul (1 Corinthians 13:11)

You know, even though I rarely sympathize with anything Paul has to say in the Bible, I *did* relate to this verse when it came to the undersized playground equipment pictured below ... Of course, shortly thereafter I remembered that Jesus told us that it was necessary to “**become again as a child**” in order to powerfully serve others, and thereby experience the state of pure Bliss he liked to call “**the Kingdom of Heaven**” (Luke 17:20-21) ... And then I remembered that, as an active Follower of The Way of Christ -- that is, as someone who has chosen to embody the principles of practical selflessness & radical Kindness that Jesus lived & taught, it was exactly moments like these that I am to actually **embrace**, not disengage or run from; that if I can do anything at all to provide a smile of Joy or a sigh of Peace to another, then that is exactly what I have been Called to do -- and that this is true whether I happen to fit on the damn playground equipment or not; indeed, especially because I so obviously didn't!

So here's to wishing you all the humility necessary to see your own challenges of fear &/or discomfort -- your own personal undersized rocking horses, along with the courage to then hop right on and ride like the wind.

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become again like small children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:3)



Matthew 23:23 ... Tithes that please the Lord
(05/03/2015)

Just as a brief reminder: If you are a Christian and you tithe money to a church of any size instead of giving that money directly to the poor of your community, you have completely missed the point ... **and** I will say as well that if you are a preacher or a pastor or a reverend in a church of any size who is even one cent richer than the poorest member of your congregation, then you most certainly are NOT a true “Man (or Woman) of GOD”.

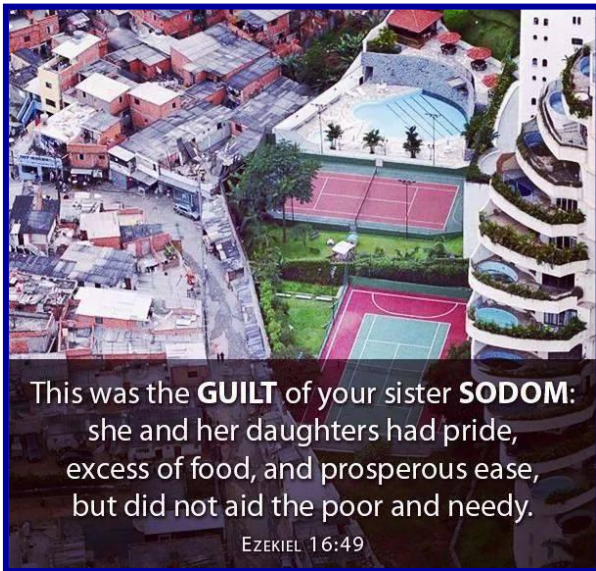
“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and yet have neglected the weightier matters of the law: namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness ... For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these among you, so you did it for me.”

~ **Jesus Christ** (Matthew 23:23 & Matthew 25:35-40)





No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.
(Matthew 6: 24)



"THOSE WHO CLAIM THEY ARE OF GOD SHOULD LIVE THEIR LIVES LIKE JESUS DID."
1 JOHN 2:6

NOTE: This post is in no way aimed only at Joel Osteen's obscene opulence, but rather at *all* preachers & pastors & rabbis & reverends who still have the gall to worship Jesus Christ, serve the poor , and hoard material wealth.

P.S. For those who argue that Jesus himself was wealthy – and therefore was accepting of, if not an advocate for – the accumulation & maintenance of personal riches, please consider the following truths:

*The question is not whether or not Jesus was poor, but rather why some are so determined to say that he wasn't -- especially when doing so would show Jesus to be at least a partial hypocrite (see [Matthew 19:21](#) + [Mark 10:25](#) + the verses I mentioned in this original post, for starters) -- and we all know how much Jesus clearly hated hypocrisy & how much he vehemently disliked hypocrites (see [Matthew 23](#) et al).

*Jesus clearly said, “[If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven; then come thereafter and follow me.](#)” ([Matthew 19:21](#))

*Jesus did not have a lucrative occupation ... The Greek word in [Matthew](#) for Jesus' occupation has been frequently translated as “[carpenter](#)”, and yet a more accurate translation would change that word to “[laborer](#)”.

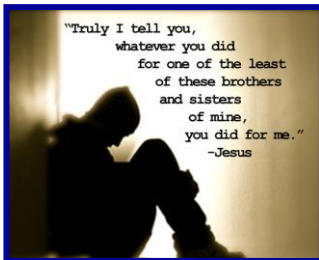
*Jesus and his disciples were actually quite poor, at least according to archaeological evidence ... Eric Meyers, a professor of archaeology at Duke University and editor of the Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East, says he has personally excavated the village of Nazareth where Jesus lived. He pointed out that the Bible says Jesus was so poor that he couldn't afford his own tomb for his burial. “There is no way to speak of wealth in that context,” he says. “This is living at the margins of society, eking out an agricultural existence.”

*When Jesus was first presented in the Temple, his parents sacrificed two turtle doves which, according to the Book of [Leviticus](#) ([Leviticus 12:2-8](#)), was the sacrifice offered by poor people.

*When a scribe came to Jesus and declared his intentions to follow him, Jesus said to that man: “[Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not even a place to lay my head](#)” ([Matthew 8:20](#)). Jesus did not have a home to call his own. As an itinerant preacher he probably depended on people like Lazarus and his family and well-to-do admirers to provide for him and his disciples.

*If Jesus' family was wealthy, why then did Mary in her praise say, “[He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.](#)”

*In [Matthew 11:7-8](#) Jesus noted: “[What did you go out into the wilderness to see; a reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see; a man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts.](#)” ... Neither John nor Jesus dressed as those who show God's blessings today with thousand dollar suits and shoes.



*Jesus made it quite clear that his Kingdom is “[not of this world.](#)” ([John 18:36](#))

*Jesus was buried in *another man's tomb*. It is reasonable to assume that if he (or his family) was rich, he would have been buried in his own (or his family's) tomb.

*Note [Zechariah 9:9](#) as well – “Behold, your King is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Even his fulfilling prophecy as a king was done in a position of abject in humility. He came as an impoverished servant, not as a wealthy king.

*Jesus also quite clearly noted that “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.” ([Matthew 23:12](#))

*Jesus himself accepted not a single tithe in the entire Bible.

*Next, please see [Mark 6:32-44](#) (the miracle of the 5,000 fed), where we find Jesus asking the disciples to feed the hungry people who have sat all day listening to His teaching. They respond by incredulously noting that they in no way have the monies necessary to fulfill such a task. Now, the money required to feed that many folks would have been the equivalent of about thirty dollars – a fair amount then, and yet certainly not an undoable sum for even one wealthy man, much less thirteen! Indeed, as Philip intimated in [John 6:7](#), they apparently did have the necessary funds in the common purse they carried with them (see [John 12:6](#); [Matthew 26:8-9](#); [Luke 8:3](#)), and yet *only* this amount – certainly not at all an amount reflective of a wealthy band of travelers.



*Also, note that Jesus sent his disciples out without any money ([Matthew 10:9-12](#)) -- “Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs ... Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.”

*Before Jesus is betrayed (see [Luke 22:35-36](#)) he told the disciples, “When I sent you *without money* or bag or knapsack or and sandals, did you lack anything?” And they replied: “Nothing.” And then Jesus said to them, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” Now I ask you -- if the disciples were wealthy, would they need to sell one of their only two garments to purchase a small sword? Of course not!

*Note as well that the Temple Tax which Peter paid for Jesus and himself in [Mathew 17](#) did not come out of their common purse: “When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the Temple Tax came to Peter and asked, ‘Does your teacher not pay the Temple Tax?’ And he answered, ‘Yes.’” Jesus later spoke with Peter about it, asking “From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute, from their children or from others?” When Peter answered, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the children are unburdened. However, so that we do not give offense, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a coin. Take it and give it to them for me and you.” ([Matthew 17:24-27](#))

*When Mary took a pound of very costly oil and anointed the feet of Jesus in [John 12](#), Judas Iscariot said, “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denari and given to the poor?”, which is not something a man of wealthy means would have asked. In addition, if the disciples were a wealthy band or men, there would have been no need for Judas to ask for thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus – as he did in [Luke 22:4-5](#) & [Mark 14:10-11](#).

*Jesus also said quite clearly, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.” ([Luke 6:20](#))

*See also Jesus’ commentary in [Matthew 6:19-21](#): “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

* Jesus also spoke many times against the taint of riches, including in [Matthew 13:22-23](#): “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and *the deceitfulness of riches* choke that word, and he becomes unfruitful.”

*And see his similar anti-materialism testimony in [Mark 8:34-37](#): “Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own Soul?”

* And Jesus also warns of the desire that underlies the possession of riches in [Luke 12:15-21](#) when he said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” He then shared a parable with them about a rich man who was planning a future expansion, summing it up in verse 21: “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

*And finally see [Luke 14:33](#), where Jesus states, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he owns cannot be my disciple.”



John 12:47 ... on bullying God
(05/21/2015)

There are more than a few Truths out there worth noting, and one of them is the following: Within every bully who rears his angry, judgmental, and aggressive head rests a Heart that is wounded and in immense pain ... And another Truth is much like it: The only way to deal effectively with bullies is to give them the one thing they are missing -- which happens to also be the one thing they most fear -- that being flagrant Forgiveness & unconditional Love.

And so today I publicly give a shout-out of **Forgiveness & Love** to one of our society's most insidious bullies ---- conservative Christianity ...

Evangelicals & fundamentalists, your dogma is dying and you know it ... You are vainly trying to keep your exclusivist faith alive by meeting en masse in mega-churches, and yet those callous caverns do nothing more than boldly announce how feebly your condemnations ring ... You are futilely trying to resuscitate your limiting beliefs by following the hollow words of hypocrites & adhering to the meandering messages of megalomaniacs, and yet deep within you *know* their words are meaningless, just as you *know* their sermons are sin-filled.

And so you begin to feel insecure -- you begin to feel afraid -- and you begin to bully ... You bully others by telling them that they are sinners ... You bully others by telling them that they are damned ... You bully others by telling them that God will judge them ... You bully others by telling them that their far more gentle (see “radical” – or even “heretical”) interpretations of Scripture are blasphemous ... You bully them by telling them that their lifestyles are immoral or that their wishes for Peace are flawed. My dear conservative Friends, all these behaviors show is that you are afraid – that you are deathly afraid that your God is “losing”, and that you are not-so-subtly terrified that your comfortable culture is fading away ... And this is why you bully those who believe differently than you; not because you are cruel or cold-hearted or callous or even clueless -- but simply because you are scared.



And ironically, even tragically, in doing so you are also bullying The Way of Jesus Christ ... and you are also bullying your own Lord & Savior and you are also bullying your God.

Well, my conservative Christian compatriots, fortunately for us **all**, none of this really matters. For if one thing is certain it is this: *If* your Jesus is even half as awesome as he seems to be in the Gospels of your Bible, and *if* your God is even half as Loving as Jesus says he is therein, then your arrogance & your judgment & your aggression & your bullying will all be forgiven -- and your Christianity will continue to smoothly evolve into a far more Loving, a far more humble, a far more accepting, and thus a far more godly form.

Amen ... Let it continue to be so.

*“The Father judges **no one**, but has instead given all judgment to the Son ... You judge by human standards, and yet **I JUDGE NO ONE** ... Indeed, I do not judge anyone -- even those who hear my words and do not keep them.”*

~ Jesus Christ (John 5:22, John 8:15 & John 12:47)



Luke 6:30-35 ... To Give the Giving (05/28/2015)

The one time in the Bible where Jesus was intensely pressured into explaining the Salvation about which he so often spoke, he opened up and clearly stated that *his* “Kingdom of Heaven” was not a paradise of pleasure to which we travel someday after we die, but rather is a state of Bliss-full Being that resides within each and every one of us in every moment of our lives; and this, regardless of our particular faith -- or even our possible lack thereof. (see [Luke 17:20-21](#))

And when Jesus was pressed into explaining his many parables, he always reminded those listening in that the “Kingdom of Heaven” of which he spoke could only be accessed via selfless *actions* of generosity & compassion & kindness -- especially those actions that require us to courageously sacrifice our own personal ease in order to bring a stranger solace; especially those actions that require us to courageously confront our own fears in order to bring an enemy forgiveness; especially those actions that require us to courageously sacrifice our own personal comfort to bring the downtrodden a renewed abundance of wealth or sustenance. (see [Matthew 25:40](#), [Mark 10:21](#), [Luke 14:13](#) et al).

And the really neat thing about these particular teachings is: **THEY ACTUALLY WORK!** That's right, regardless of whether you are a Christian or not, every single person alive today can enter Jesus' “Kingdom of Heaven” whenever they wish -- every single one of us can experience a sense of Happiness & Contentment beyond anything we have ever known before; an almost incapacitating welling up of Peace & Joy (a phenomenal sensation I call “Bliss”, for lack of a better term).

And experiencing such Salvation doesn't require us to give any money to the poor -- indeed, money is never enough to do so even when it *is* given. For the mere gift of money is always too easy, always too cold, and always too distanced. No, my Friends, to enter the “Kingdom of Heaven” of which Jesus spoke, all it takes is a little humility, a lot of courage, and then a short leap into life as a selfless servant of anyone nearby who happens to be in need.

For example ...



*Whenever you are hungry or thirsty and a beggar asks you for some spare change for some food & drink, and you take her by the hand, lead her to a restaurant, sit down with her there and buy her lunch or dinner instead ... you enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

*And whenever you are cold & wet and a homeless man asks you for some money to buy a coat, and you take him by the hand, lead him to a store, sit down with him there and buy him a coat (&/or some pants &/or some socks &/or some shoes &/or a hat) instead ... you enter the Kingdom of Heaven.



In essence, every beggar and every homeless person we encounter (*especially* those who truly are “dirty bums” or “disgusting alcoholics” or “lazy con-artists”) deserves to receive our most gentle respect, our most humble compassion, and our most courageous LOVE -- every single one of them, every single time we encounter them. It really doesn't matter **how** we do so, my Friends -- only *that* we do so.

So please consider doing so today ... **Thank you.**



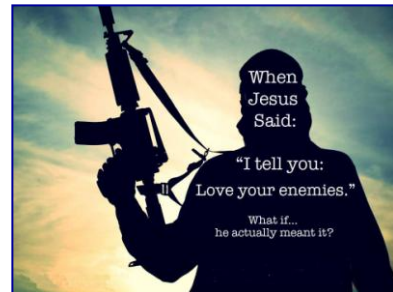
“Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again ... If you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you give only to those from whom you hope to receive in return, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners ... But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:30-35)

Luke 6:27 ... To LOVE like we Do
(05/29/2015)

As much as we would like to do so, we cannot force others to see Love as we do. We cannot force others to let go of their fears, to become vulnerable to real intimacy, or humbly attempt to walk the Truth of LOVE from the perspective of the OTHER ... No, most of us prefer to see only how different those other's shoes are -- or how "ugly" -- or how "heretical" -- or how "untrue". Instead of having the courage to slip that footwear on for awhile to see firsthand (actually, "first Heart") the hard and yet-often-beautiful miles they have tread, we judge the wearers of those coverings as "enemy" or "dangerous" or "evil". And as a result, real enmity is created, real danger is engendered, and real evil grows ever stronger.

Well my choice is a different one ... My choice is to live a LOVE that is *other*-centered -- even towards my enemies; even towards those who are "dangerous"; even towards those who seem "evil". This at-times self-sacrificial courage is not the comfortable choice, that is true, and yet this Narrow Way is indeed the only choice we have that allows the Friend in every enemy to reemerge; the Peace in every clear and present danger to shine anew; and the Good to blossom forth from everyone seemingly malicious.

And I understand that this view is quite unpopular. I get that I just don't fit in, and I humbly admit -- I don't want to. Because in the moments that we do "fit in" -- in the moments that we do complain about our enemies or establish "healthy boundaries" against them or attack them in "self-defense", it is not LOVE we are living and it is not LOVE we will create ... No, in such moments of reasonable fear and self-centered reactions thereto, it is self-preservation we are living, and it is fear & fear alone that we thus bring forth and strengthen.



My Friends, I can wholeheartedly assure you that when you make LOVE an active & conscient choice, you require no protection. And I can equally assure you that if you choose the easier path -- if you attempt to defend or to preserve or to protect or to build up yourself via your own version of "love", then thereby you will fully deny true LOVE's magnificent brilliance -- and you will actually prevent true LOVE from doing what true LOVE always ultimately does -- which is **WIN!**



(~ inspired by Vanessa Curley)

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:27)

Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13 ... Bashing the Bigotry
(a.k.a. *Gays & the Grace of God*)
(06/13/2015)

I am currently involved in an extremely intriguing (and sometimes somewhat heated) discussion with a few of my right-wing anti-gay Facebook Friends ... To simplify & summarize, they claim that homosexuality is a “sin” (indeed, a mortal one -- worthy of capital punishment &/or eternal damnation). They believe that God has made this decree in the Bible (specifically citing [Leviticus 18:22](#), which calls homosexual sex an “abomination” & [Leviticus 20:13](#), which makes having gay sex a capital offense punishable by death) and that as such any “true Christian” must believe as they do and openly denounce the same.



I, on the other hand -- as a non-religious yet devout Follower of The Way of Christ, have been trying (admittedly, without much success) to awaken these dear Friends to the simple **FACT** that their own Bible actually offers an equally valid alternative on this matter -- an alternative that is fully supported by both Scripture & biblical scholarship; indeed an alternative that is both supported & exemplified in the Bible’s Gospels by the words & deeds of Jesus Christ himself.



And yet despite my best efforts to reach any semblance of common ground, back & forth we continue to go -- with my Friends claiming that they have access to “the only Truth” (which happens to be quite a condemnatory one), and with me devoutly championing open-minded Humility over conservative dogma, radical Kindness over calloused condemnation, & unconditional Love over hate-provoking bigotry.

Needless to say, our conversation hasn't made much progress.

Now even though I do Love these Friends quite deeply and am incredibly thankful for having them in my life, they really aren't honoring much of what I have to share ... Where I at least openly admit that they *could* possibly be right (and then sincerely question why they or anyone else would choose to worship such a capriciously wicked version of God), they have repeatedly affirmed that their interpretation of Scripture is the only correct one, that they are the ones who truly know who Jesus is, and that I am “distorting Jesus” via my Bible-based beliefs that God’s Grace is indeed unconditional and that the Love of Christ is indeed perfect – given to all without exception; even to unrepentant homosexuals.

And so there I was yesterday, wondering why I continue to expend so much energy trying to show these folks that there is indeed a far greater God of a far more “radical Grace” in their own Bible, and this when they really aren't interested in learning anything from me at all about the same ... I will admit, I was quite tempted to “bail” on them and get back to other “more important” tasks in my life; services to others that had a greater chance of doing some real Good.

And then I remembered a few very important things – Truths that we would all do well to remember often in our everyday dealings with others ...

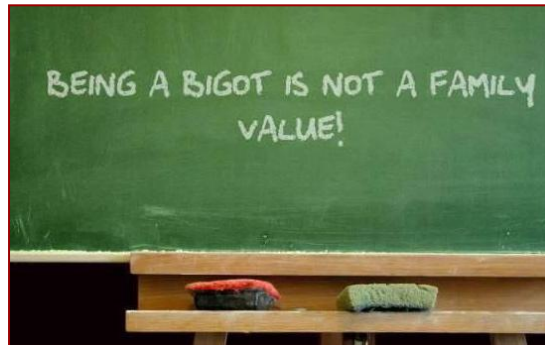
First, I remembered that behind every bigoted belief lies a person suffering from a very deep wound; someone harboring a pain worthy of warmth and Kindness; and that underneath every hateful or intolerant façade beats a Heart that truly Cares & a Heart that is innately Kind – a Heart just as worthy of Love.

Second, I remembered that it is precisely these types of less-functional interactions that we are called to fully *embrace*, and that it is precisely these types of encounters with “enemies” that can inspire us all to strengthen ourselves enough to feel empathy & humble ourselves enough to learn.

And indeed, this is exactly what is happening for me! Not only have I developed an even deeper respect & adoration for my right-wing homosexuality-condemning Friends, I have also been inspired to more fully research this particular facet of bigotry, and as such have also been inspired to now share with you all some very important rediscoveries of **Fact & Truth** that I have made as a result ... As such, first feel free to consider the following basic FACTS:

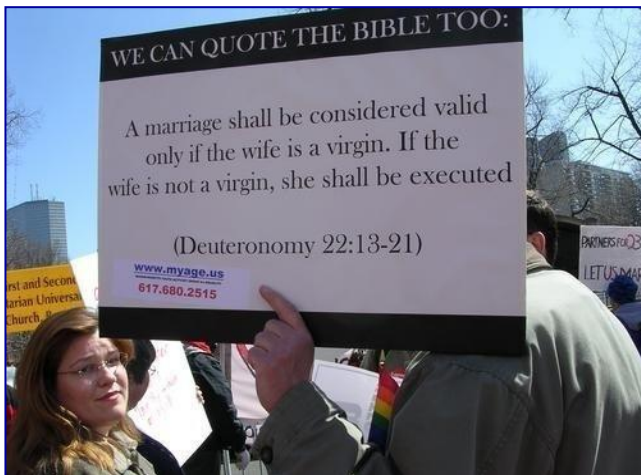
***FACT #01:** While the population of Christians is steadily declining in the United States (down from 77% in 2012 to about 71% in 2014), Christianity remains a major player in that country, with roughly 90% of all American politicians & judges professing to be members of a Bible-based faith. In addition, Christianity has remained the most popular religion in the world, currently professing well over 2 **billion** adherents and consistently occupying roughly 32% of the world's population ... As such, whether you are Christian or not, it is **IMPORTANT** for you to know about Christian beliefs and it is **IMPORTANT** for you to become knowledgeable about Christian-based bigotries.

***FACT #02:** While it is tempting to casually dismiss Christian homophobia and Bible-based Christian bigotry as “exceptions to the rule” – and while there is indeed a growing trend within the Christian community to be more tolerant (if not downright accepting) of homosexuals & transgenders, the disturbing fact remains that a significant portion of the Christian community (roughly 40%, according to a cross-referenced analysis of several recent national polls – including Life Way Research, PEW & the Public Religion Research Institute) still believes that homosexuality is a “mortal sin”.



And now, with this all in mind, I offer the following **TRUTHS**:

***TRUTH #01:** At least as far as the Bible is concerned, “**DAMNATION IS ALL or NOTHING**” ... In essence, this means that if conservative Christians (or any Christians, for that matter) are going to quote two verses from the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the “Old Testament”) to condemn millions of homosexual “sinners” (and thus laud their eternal punishment in Hell), then those same “evangelical” fundamentalists **must adhere to the rest** of its verses as well.



Indeed, two of the New Testament's most prominent authors affirmed this very same problem – with Paul noting clearly that, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey **ALL** the things written in the book of the **Law**” (Galatians 3:10), and James noting that, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails **EVEN IN ONE POINT** has become accountable for all of it.” (James 2:10)

And why is this a problem for gay-bashing condemnatory Christians? Well, as I am sure many of you are already aware, the Bible's Old Testament is literally FULL of hateful, bigoted laws & regulations, many of which also carry the death penalty as punishment, and as such are fully on par with the "abomination" of homosexuality mentioned in the book of [Leviticus](#) ... Consider the following small sampling thereof:

[Leviticus 20:10-12](#) notes that both parties to any act of adultery are to be punished **by death** (and remember as well that Jesus said that even *thinking* about having sex with someone other than your spouse counts as adultery!) ...

[Deuteronomy 22:20-21](#) notes that a woman who does not bleed while/after losing her virginity is to be punished **by death** (a law which actually condemns the vast majority of non-virgin women to this day) ...

[Deuteronomy 22:23-27](#) notes that virgin rape *victims* are to be punished **by death** ...

[Deuteronomy 13:1-5](#) notes that anyone uttering "false prophecy" shall be punished **by death** ...

[Leviticus 20:18](#) notes that all men who have sex with a menstruating woman are to be punished **by death** ...

[Leviticus 24:16](#) makes it quite clear that all those committing "blasphemy" are to be punished **by death** (though what qualifies as "blasphemy" is never clearly stated) ...

[Exodus 31:14](#) states that all who "profane the Sabbath" shall be punished **by death** (though it is never made clear exactly what activities "profane" that holy day) ... and:

[Exodus 21:17](#) notes that anyone who curses his or her father or mother shall be punished **by death**.

Please recognize that most of these are sins are described in the Bible as being just as "abhorrent" in the eyes of the conservative Christian God, and please note as well that there is little doubt that at least some of these "mortal laws" have been violated by almost every single Christian who happens to be condemning homosexual inclinations & behaviors. As such, all those Christians who would attempt to use the Bible to attack gays or transgenders in any way would do well to heed the words of their own Lord & Savior when he said,

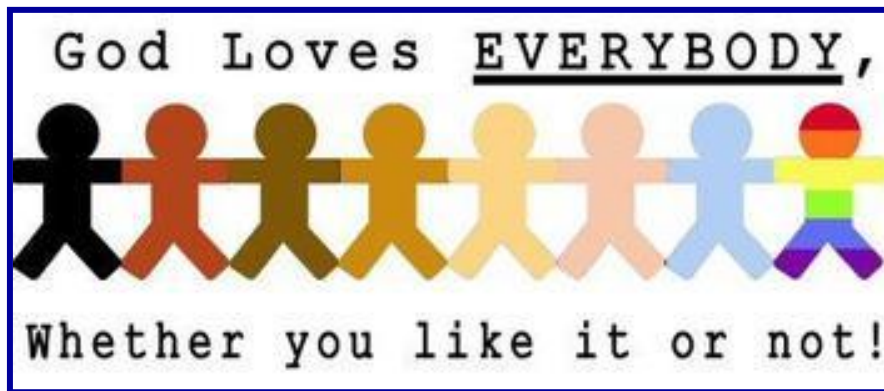
*"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged, for with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while a similar log is in your own? You hypocrite! First **take the log out of your own eye**, and only then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's ... Truly, **let he without sin cast the first stone.**" ~ Jesus Christ*
(Matthew 7:1-5 & John 8:7)

***TRUTH #02:** At least according to The Way of Jesus Christ, “All HOMOSEXUALS ARE HEADED to HEAVEN” ... That’s right, my Friends – regardless of your personal religious affiliations (or even your possible complete lack thereof), you can *all* take solace in knowing that the Bible itself provides an interpretation that allows for Salvation for EVERYONE – even the greatest of “sinners” – even gays & lesbians & transgenders!!!

You see, there is this really neat passage in the book of [Hebrews](#) that sums it up very clearly – a passage that goes something like this:

*“But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises, for if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one ... In speaking of ‘a new covenant’, **He has made the first one obsolete.** And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.”*
~ [Hebrews 8:6-13](#)

So even though our conservative, fundamentalist Christian Friends will try to reconcile using the Old Testament’s ominous oracles (or the New Testament’s putrid professions of Paul) to justify their bigoted condemnation of the homosexual “lifestyle”, Jesus himself came to show EVERYONE (especially the Old Testament-adhering Pharisees of his day, and even the modern Paul-following “Pharisees” of our own) that there is indeed a New Covenant available to all – that there is indeed another Way to enter Heaven, and that there is indeed another, far more Loving God who resides there!!!



My dear Friends, it is no accident that Jesus spoke of a heavenly Father who “judges no one” ([John 5:22](#)), and it is no accident that Jesus himself admonished us all to “forgive 70 times seven” ([Matthew 18:22](#)) and “become humble again as little children” ([Matthew 18:3-4](#)) and let our own Love for *all* the others in our lives become as perfect as God’s Love is perfect ([Matthew 5:48](#)) – even those so different from us that we consider them to be “enemies” ([Matthew 5:44](#)).

And so I encourage **ALL OF YOU** – Christians and non-Christians alike – to reawaken your Heart of Hearts and walk The Way anew. I encourage all you conservative, judgmental Christians to set aside your ignorance and your hatred for those not like you and those not perfectly reflecting your own beliefs ... and I encourage all of you “liberal” & “progressive” (a.k.a. Caring) Christians to set aside your cowardice and have the courage to stand up to all the Christian denouncers & damners in your midst; to stand up firmly & gently to meet their hatred head on with your Love, and thereby shatter the stumbling blocks of their bigotry with the same.

Amen ... Let it be so!



“My request today is simple. Today -- or tomorrow -- or next week -- find somebody, anybody, that’s different than you; somebody that has made you feel nervous or angry or even hateful; somebody whose life decisions have made you uncomfortable; somebody who practices a different religion than you do; somebody who has been lost to addiction; somebody with a criminal past; somebody who dresses 'below' you; somebody with disabilities; somebody who lives an alternative lifestyle; somebody without a home ... Somebody that you, until now, would always avoid, always look down on, and always be disgusted by ... I want you to find that somebody, and I want you to reach your arm out and put it around them ... And then I want you to tell them they’re all right. Tell them they have a friend. Tell them you love them ... If you or I wanna make any real and positive change in this world, that’s where we’re gonna be able to do it. That’s where we’ll have to start.” ~ inspired by Dan Pearce

John 3:1-10 ... Becoming Born Again (06/20/2015)

I frequently hear or read about folks mentioning that they are “Born Again”, and I used to wonder exactly what they meant when they did so ... So I did a little research, and I found out that -- for the most part -- being “Born Again” (in the traditional Christian sense) entails a person openly & completely giving his or her entire life to Jesus Christ; for him or her to devoutly worship Jesus as the only Son of God that ever was or ever will be; and for him or her to bow down to Jesus as their “only Lord & Savior” – thereby developing a personal relationship with his resurrected spirit, and thereby becoming eligible to live forever in Heaven with God after his or her physical body dies.

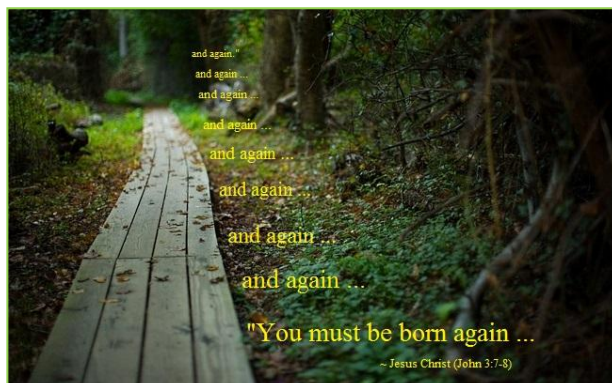
Fair enough ... Though there is no practical evidence that these folks are correct (and while there are more than a few moral inconsistencies that such a belief system brings into being), I must humbly admit that these “fundamentalists” (or “evangelicals”) Christians *might* very well be right ... Like every other sentient being on this phenomenally diverse & remarkably beautiful planet, we do not know with any certainty what awaits us on the other side of death's portal. And like every other sentient being on this planet -- including those Christians aforementioned – we will all just have to wait and see.

Frankly, I'm pretty sure myself that the only thing that is guaranteed with regards to the Hereafter is that we are *all* going to be more than a bit surprised by what we find (&/or what we don't) ...



That having been said, it *is* quite interesting to learn the little-known fact that **Jesus himself** had a very different opinion as to what being “Born Again” is and what becoming “Born Again” entails ...

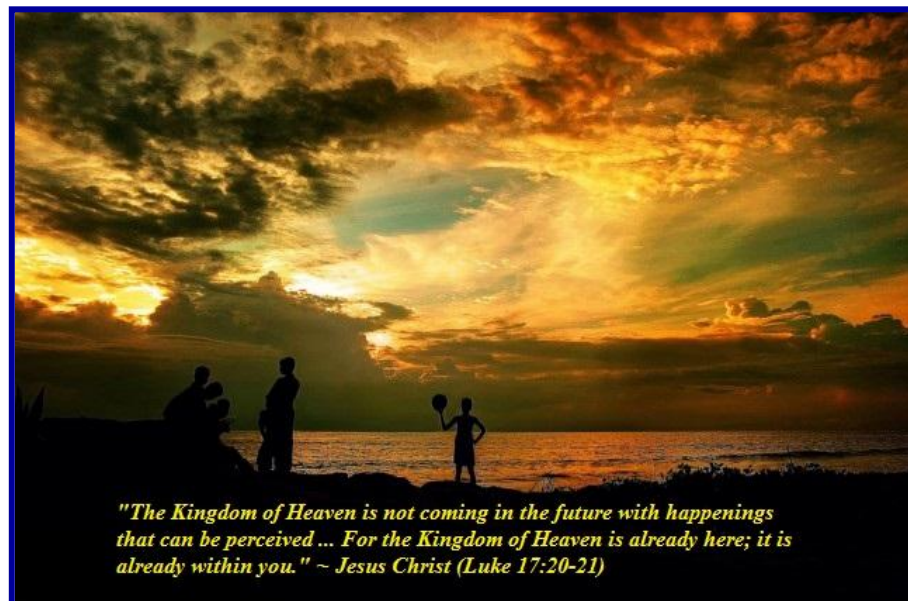
*Initially, Jesus' version of “Born Anew” was not a “merit badge” that one could permanently attain with but a single experience of fervent belief, or a single professing of sincere subservience, or even a single redemption by religious ritual. No, for Jesus at least, being “Born Again” was a flowing, fluid experience that by its nature could not last. It can be renewed as often as desired, and yet it must be continually renewed to Be.



*Secondly, Jesus felt that one became truly “Born of the Spirit” *only while acting accordingly* -- only by serving the downtrodden in one's midst; only by sacrificing one's own comfort to enhance the Peace of another; only by forgiving those who annoy or harm us their trespasses; only by giving to the poor past the point of convenience; only by being openly Kind to strangers; and only by humbly & courageously Loving our enemies ... For Jesus at least, *this* was the what it meant to be “Born Again”, and *this* was the way he wanted others to enliven his teachings and thereby obey his only two primary Commandments (see Matthew 22:37-40 + John 13:15-17).



*And finally, Jesus made it pretty clear that he was **not** giving any advice or offering any wisdom on how to get into Paradise after we die. Rather, he was actually almost obsessed with telling others over & over & over again in the Scriptures how they could enter his “Kingdom of Heaven” right here & right now -- in every single moment of their lives -- *before* they died (see Luke 17:20-21).



In closing, then, what is really fantastic about this Biblical teaching is that ANYONE & EVERYONE can put it into practice *right here & right now* -- indeed, in every single moment for the rest of your lives can you do so. All that is required is the humility to stop worrying about yourself, the decency to look around and find someone nearby who could use a bit of Kindness, and then the courage to extend them the same -- openly if they are a stranger, and anonymously if they are friend ... That's it! Every time you do so, you will enter the very same "Kingdom of Heaven" Jesus mentioned in [John chapter 3](#) -- and every time you don't, you won't ...

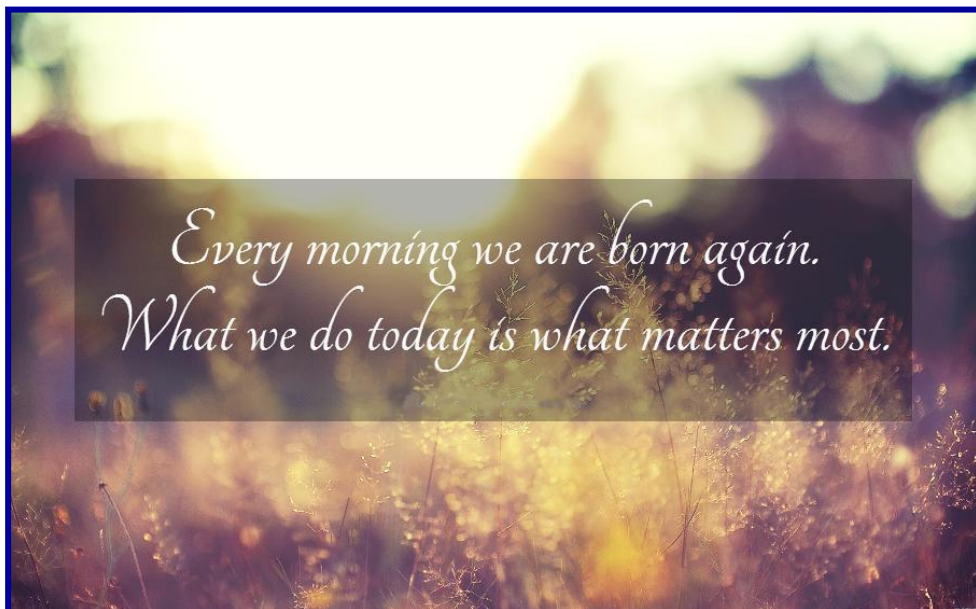
True, this way of being might not get you into "Paradise" after you die, and yet it most definitely *will* get you into **Heaven** while you are still alive.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born anew.' And Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born again?' And Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of both water and Spirit*. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit*. Do not be astonished that I said, "You all must be born anew", for the wind* blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from where it comes or to where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' And Nicodemus said to him, 'How can this be?' And Jesus answered him, 'How can you be a teacher of Israel and not understand these things?'" ~ John 3:1-10

***NOTE:** Both the terms "wind" & "Spirit" in this passage are translated from the exact same Greek term – *pneumatōs* (Strong's #4151).





1 John 4:7-16 ... on God & gays
(06/27/2015)

“Beloved, let us Love one another, because Love is from God; everyone who Loves is born of God and knows God. Indeed, whoever does not Love does not know God, for God is Love ... No one has ever seen God, and yet if we Love one another, God lives in us, and his Love is perfected in us.” ~ 1 John 4:7-16

Now that the United States Supreme Court (in an embarrassingly close 5-4 decision) has ruled that throughout the land homosexuals now have just as much a right to legally express their Love as straight people do, the backlash from the far right (especially from evangelical & fundamentalist Christians) has already begun to rear its less-than-attractive head ...

With that in mind, I thought I would offer the following concise analysis of the five most frequent general arguments you might encounter from those who still harbor less-than-humble & less-than-accepting feelings for homosexuals & homosexuality. This is information important for all homosexuals (and all heterosexuals who have friends or family members who are homosexual) to know, and it is just as important information for all conservative Christians to consider.

Argument #01) *“But we aren't judging gays; we are only judging their sin”* ... This statement is one of the more frequent rejections of homosexuality one might hear from fundamentalist Christians (or fundamentalist Jews or fundamentalist Muslims, for that matter), AND it is an argument that ignores the following three very important points of Truth --

***A)** Choosing to worship a God who clearly *does* judge some sins worthy of eternal damnation (e.g. homosexual sex – see [Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13](#)) while judging other sins to be worthy of forgiveness (e.g. ignoring Jesus' call for us to be humble as a child -- see [Matthew 18:3](#), or ignoring Jesus' call to forgive “seventy-times-seven”; with the 7 meaning “completely” & the 70 meaning “everyone” -- see [Matthew 18:22](#)) *is* judging others by proxy. In essence, hiding behind God is no excuse when it is your choice whether or not to worship such a condemnatory godhead.

***B)** It is patently hypocritical to judge others for their sins when you have not completely cleansed yourself of your own (see [Matthew 7:1-5](#)) ... and,

***C)** It is bigotry plain & simple to isolate and condemn one particular group of “sinners” for damnation **01)** when their “sin” is innate to their genetic makeup and **02)** when many other groups are (at least according to the Bible's Old Testament) equally worthy of that same condemnation.



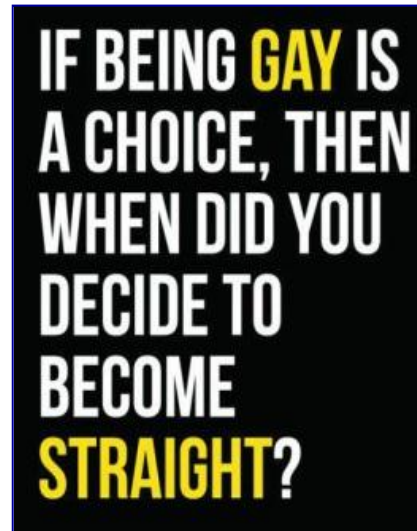
Argument #02) “*But the Bible says that gays are damned*” ... This is another argument that judgmental Christians use to justify their intolerance of homosexuality, and it is just as fundamentally flawed as its predecessor. Aside from the FACT that **nowhere** in the entire Bible is homosexuality itself deemed to be a sin (only homosexual lust &/or gay sex are so denounced), there are literally *thousands* of verses of Scripture in the Bible that “prove” that homosexuals need not be condemned at all in order for a “gay believer” to still qualify as a devout Christian ... Indeed, it is intriguing to me that conservative Christians will so readily tout the raw wrath of [Leviticus 18:22](#) & [Leviticus 20:13](#) or the ignorant intolerance of [Romans 1:26-27](#) & [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) while completely ignoring the massive amount of other verses in the Bible that speak of acceptance & humility & compassion & Love. It inspires me to ask these “believers”: what about [Matthew 5:48](#), where Jesus notes that God's Love for *all* His creations is pure and without exception? And what about [John 5:22](#), where Jesus notes that God judges **NO ONE**? And what about [1 John 4:18](#), where the author notes that God's perfect Love contains no fear, and therefore engenders **NO PUNISHMENT**? And what about [Luke 6:36](#), where Jesus tells us to “*be merciful, in the same way your Father is merciful*”? And what about [Matthew 18:22](#), where Jesus points out that we are to actualize that perfect mercy by completely forgiving *all* our lives' trespassers? And what about [Mark 12:31](#), where Jesus points out that his commandment to “*love your neighbor*” is the most important one in the entire Bible? And what about the Parable of the Good Samaritan in [Luke 10:29-37](#), which shows that the very “neighbor” to which Jesus refers in this commandment is our CULTURAL ENEMY -- in this case, homosexuals?

My Friends, bigotry is negatively judging &/or denouncing a subset of humanity that behaves or believes differently from oneself, and hiding behind a few verses from the Old Testament and a handful of verses from the “apostle” Paul does not make it any less so ... The Bible gives each and every Christian ample room to refuse to denounce gays for being gay, and as such it is a form of bigotry to read it otherwise ... Oh, and by the way, the Bible also says **THIS**:



“Why do you judge the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the beam in your own? How can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the beam is in your own? You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your neighbor’s.”
 ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:3-5)

Argument #03) *“But gays choose to be gay”* ... Setting aside for the time being the ever-growing body of scientific studies showing homosexuality is actually a “God-created” (or at the very *least* “God-allowed”) state of being that gays have from birth, we must also ask the following important questions: How is it that gays -- who are born straight -- can suddenly choose to become sexually aroused by members of the same sex? Most of those I know (including myself) do not have this ability, so why have homosexuals been granted the same? Or better stated, why would God only give some of us the ability to choose to be gay? Or even better stated, why would God make roughly 10% of the human population essentially bisexual from birth (i.e. with the ability to choose which gender they find sexually stimulating) -- and then punish those same people for eternity merely for actualizing that trait and thereby simply being true to how *He* made them?



Argument #04) *“But God doesn't send homosexuals to Hell; they choose to go there”* ... To be fair, what fundamentalist Christians are mostly saying here is that it is gays' choice to sin by being gay that has them in effect “choosing” their eternal damnation, and yet the very important question still remains: If gays do indeed inadvertently choose to go to Hell, then will they fairly be allowed to choose to leave by petitioning the all-Loving, all-powerful & all-knowing God for mercy once they arrive there and realize their mistake? *The Apocalypse of Peter* (a Biblical writing that was considered Holy Scripture for the first several hundred years after Christ's death -- and a book that [2 Timothy 3:16](#) indirectly says is still Holy Scripture to this very day) says that they *will* be able to do so. Of course, the Christian church says that they won't ... Either way, if homosexuals are indeed forced to remain in Hell forever, it will most certainly **not** be because of their choice to go there -- but rather it will be because of God's decision to keep them there.

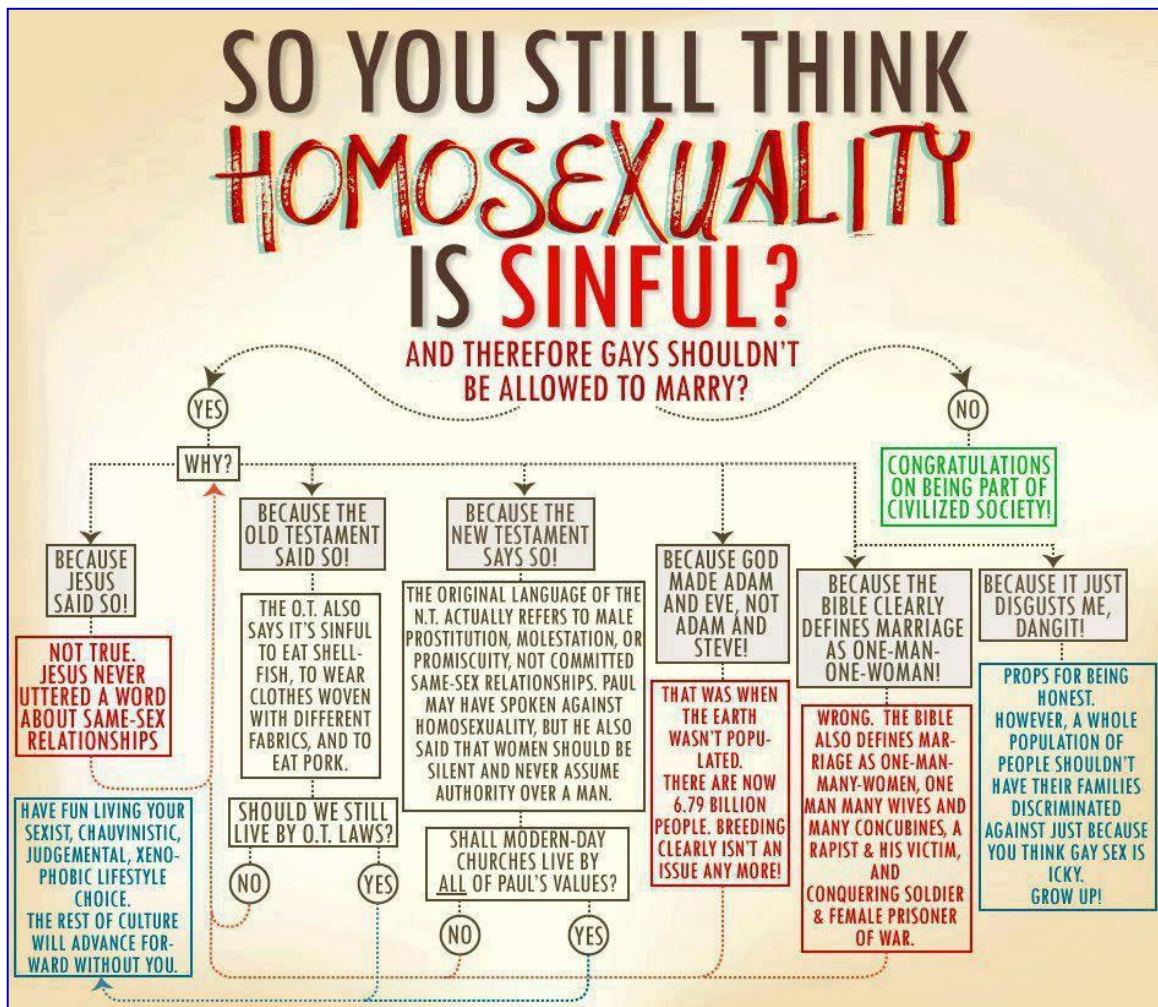
Argument #05) *“But we Love gay people. We are merely warning them of their imminent damnation”* ... Really? I wonder ... I wonder if this is really as close as conservative Christians can get to the perfect LOVE of the Father that Jesus openly describes in the Gospels (see [Matthew 5:48](#) + [John 5:22](#) et al) ... Indeed, how it is possible to truly LOVE who a person **is** by encouraging them to become who they are not (or transform into who they “could be”) ... And most importantly of all, how can anyone truly LOVE homosexuals while openly & fully worshipping a God who they know will in all likelihood allow gays to burn in Hell forever?!?!?

In conclusion then, the aforementioned Supreme Court ruling really hasn't changed much ... Homosexuals are going to keep on Loving other homosexuals, and at least some conservative Christians are probably going to keep on denouncing that Love ... I simply wanted to use this post to give you all the greater ability to **A**) gently stand up for yourselves if you are gay and find yourself attacked or condemned by a Christian, or **B**) gently stand up for homosexuals if you are straight and hear or witness any similar bigotry.

May we all one day realize that we are *all* an equally worthy part of the same, beautiful Family -- and may we *all* have the Humility to realize the same, and the Courage to act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"This is my Commandment: that you Love one another in the same manner I have Loved you." ~ Jesus (John 15:12)



Matthew 10:34 ... Wielding the Sword of Christ
(06/28/2015)

Almost invariably, whenever I am discussing the nature of Jesus Christ with my Christian brothers & sisters, the conversation at some point tends to turn to his infamous (and courageously brilliant) call for us all to “[Love our enemies](#)” (found most famously in [Matthew 5](#)) ... As a non-religious-yet-thoroughly-devout **Follower of The Way** (a radically selfless style of living championed by Christians and non-Christians alike -- from Jesus to Buddha to St. Francis to Rumi to Gandhi to MLK to Peace Pilgrim), I tend to advocate & support this particular teaching – doing so gently, and yet also doing so with great zeal. For I have seen firsthand how it powerfully works in all sorts of “dangerous” and “deadly” situations, and I understand how its wisdom perfectly meshes with what secular scientists have so far come to understand about the basic nature of both human psychology and human sociology ... Essentially, actively & humbly choosing to be sincerely Kind to those “least worthy” of that Kindness (&/or those “enemies” to whom we least wish to give the same) FUNCTIONS every time it is employed, and it does so in exact proportion to the degree of courage we happen to apply when doing so.

Of course, almost without exception, my Christian counterparts (and indeed almost all of my non-Christian ones as well) end up loudly protesting that such a belief system is “not at all what Jesus meant” in the Sermon on the Mount -- that to be nice to our neighbors and co-workers and associates and even the occasional stranger is one thing, but to be actively Kind to those who are scaring us or denigrating us or harming us is “enabling” &/or “irresponsible” &/or “crazy” &/or even “masochistic” ... And to add a bit of weight to their claims, my Christian Friends tend to fire back at me with [Matthew 10:34](#), a verse which has Jesus Christ uttering the somewhat ominous – “[Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.](#)”



Case closed, right? Well, not exactly ...

Indeed, as is the case with almost any Bible verse, this one can by itself be taken and molded any number of ways to support any number of claims. Indeed, if I didn't know any better (having been involved in an active, daily “love affair” with the Bible for the past 11 years of my life), I too would possibly believe that this verse meant that Jesus was an avid supporter of violently destroying our enemies abroad (see ISIS) or vociferously damning all our “heretics” at home.

AND YET -- as is also the case with almost any Bible verse, a full understanding of a verse's depth (and therefore its brilliance) can only be appreciated by having the humility & the diligence to **LOOK DEEPER**, and this is what I will now do with the “**Sword of Christ**” in **Matthew 10:34** ... Please consider:

***01)** The verse’s *immediate context*: Discovering what was originally intended with any particular Bible verse is often as easy as reading the verses that immediately precede &/or immediately follow it. In this case, we need look no further than the latter to see that the “**sword**” Jesus was talking about was actually the lack of Peace that comes to all *households* when one member thereof chooses to break free from conventional tradition to start living the selfless Way of radical Kindness and humble Service he advocated ...

“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:35-36)

So right away, without even looking any further, we can see quite clearly that **Matthew 10:34** really has nothing at all to do with condemning those who believe differently than we do, or “defending ourselves” by physically attacking those who we fear will harm us in the future.

No, my Friends, quite obviously this verse is telling us that *if* we have the courage to set forth on the Narrow Way of humble generosity & brave self-sacrifice, that our family members & our closest friends will probably reject such a decision -- that they will probably worry about us openly and even sometimes loudly encourage us to abandon our new Way and “return to the fold” of normalcy & cowardice.

Indeed, while I cannot speak for anyone else who has made this great Leap of Faith, I did personally experience this particular interpretation to be True myself when I first set out to enliven The Way back in the early months of 2006. Family members expressed avid concern, friends voiced open doubt, and strangers blasted me with open ridicule ... And yet I continued to walk that Way, and the “Sword of Truth” it embodies allowed me to – for the most part – set those criticisms aside and continue to Love others the way we all are meant to Love them.

*02) The verse's *synoptic comparison*: Another great way to analyze a particular verse of Scripture is to examine other places in the Bible where its speaker makes similar statements ... **Matthew, Mark & Luke** (known by biblical scholars as the "Synoptic Gospels") are especially helpful for this technique, as they all tend to follow a very similar story line. Indeed, most scholars are now in agreement that **Matthew & Luke** were both written using **Mark** (almost uniformly recognized by biblical experts as having been the Gospel written before all others) as a model for their own works. In the case at hand, we can see in the **12th chapter of Luke** that the situation found in **Matthew 10** is seemingly being described again, and yet here the word choice used by the author of the former is significantly different -- "*Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather **DIVISION.***" ~ *Jesus Christ (Luke 12:51)*

So here again, another piece of evidence falls into place suggesting that Jesus is talking about the *emotional conflict* that arises between those who choose to remain shackled to the relatively self-focused political & religious conventions of their day and those who choose to break free of the same to live lives of radical, selfless, courageous LOVE.

*03) The verse's *New Testament context*: Next, we can look at how a particular word -- in this case "**sword**" -- is used by its utterer (here, Jesus) throughout the rest of the particular Testament where it is found. In the case at hand, most famously we see Jesus telling his disciples quite clearly in three of the four Gospels that "**to live by the sword is to die by the sword**" (see **Matthew 26:52-55, Luke 22:49-52 & John 18:10-11**). This is quite obviously a radical call to *nonviolence*, especially when we note that Jesus is being violently arrested by an armed throng of ill-intended enemies when he makes this statement.

In addition, we also find one other passage of interest related to Jesus and swords in the **22nd chapter** of the Gospel of **Luke**, where Jesus tells his disciples to begin preparing for the end of his ministry, and that "**the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one**". Taken alone, this verse seems to advocate that we arm ourselves for purposes of conflict or self-defense, and yet critical are the few verses that immediately follow, where his disciples tell him that they have two swords already -- two swords to fight the entire Roman garrisons of Jerusalem and the entire throng of angry Pharisees therein as well -- and Jesus looks to them (probably smiling) and says "**It is enough**" (**Luke 22:36-38**); quite obviously saying thereby that this greatest of conflicts -- the conflict between darkness & the Light; the battle between evil & Goodness; the war between fear & Love -- is **NOT** a fight that can be won using any kind of force or violence!



*04) The verse's *full biblical context*: Finally, after exhausting the aforementioned tools of interpretation, we can know the greater depths of any particular term in the Bible by seeing where and how it is applied in the rest of the Bible. In the case at hand, “sword” is used in quite a few places in the Old Testament -- much of the time in the standard Old Testament context of violence or self-defense (two concepts that Jesus consistently rebuked throughout his ministry). And yet there are more than a few exceptions that are both intriguing & telling ...

The **FIRST** comes from [Genesis 3:24](#), where we see “flaming swords” guarding the Tree of Knowledge ...

The **SECOND** are the “[captives of the sword](#)” mentioned in [Genesis 31:26](#) – a phrase that directly juxtaposes [Luke 4:18](#), where Jesus proclaimed that he had come to “free the captives” ...

The **THIRD** is found in [Psalm 22:20](#), where we find the phrase “free my Soul from the sword” (easily fore-reflective of Paul’s mention in [Ephesians 6:17](#) of the “sword of the Spirit” ...

The **FOURTH** is found in [Isaiah 49:2](#) (written by “Isaiah II” -- the author of [Isaiah chapters 40-55](#), who happens to be the Old Testament author that Jesus quotes more than all others) which states that “He made my *mouth* like a sharp sword” (interestingly reflected in [Hebrews 4:12](#), which notes that “the Word of God is living and active; sharper than any two-edged sword”) ...

And the **FIFTH** is an intriguing reflection upon [Isaiah 66:16](#) (written by “Isaiah III”, an author of whom Jesus was apparently *NOT* very fond). Here, in direct opposition to the all-Loving Father so often & so openly championed by Jesus (see [Luke 6:36](#) + [Matthew 5:48](#) et al), we see a very angry God brutally slaying those who have disappointed Him via the words -- “For by fire will the Lord execute judgment, and by his sword, on all flesh; and those slain by the Lord shall be many.”

What is especially interesting about this particular “sword” passage is how differently we see Jesus respond in an eerily similar situation found much later in the Bible (in the [9th chapter of Luke](#)), where he and his disciples have just been driven away by a Samaritan village (the cultural arch-enemy of the Jews in Jesus' day), and his disciples ask him if he wants them to “[command fire to come down from heaven and consume them](#)”. And yet instead of repeating the violence & wrath wrought by God in [Isaiah 66](#), Jesus instead turns to his disciples and sternly rebukes their lust for violent retribution upon those who have trespassed against them (see [Luke 9:51-55](#))!

So, in *conclusion* -- as you can probably tell, I could ever go on & on about the contents of the Bible; its multi-layered wisdom and its wondrous depths, and yet I think we can now at least put this particular verse to rest in its proper bed ... Jesus was a Prophet of Peace and a self-proclaimed Son of a God whose LOVE knew no conditions and whose Grace knew no limitation. As such, any time a verse is used to contradict that notion -- any time the words of Jesus are used to justify condemnation or violence of any kind -- we can be almost positive that even a cursory investigation will uncover a far different meaning; a meaning that reflects his call for us to live boldly as agents of Compassion & Forgiveness; a meaning that encourages & fulfills his ultimate message of Love & Peace instead.

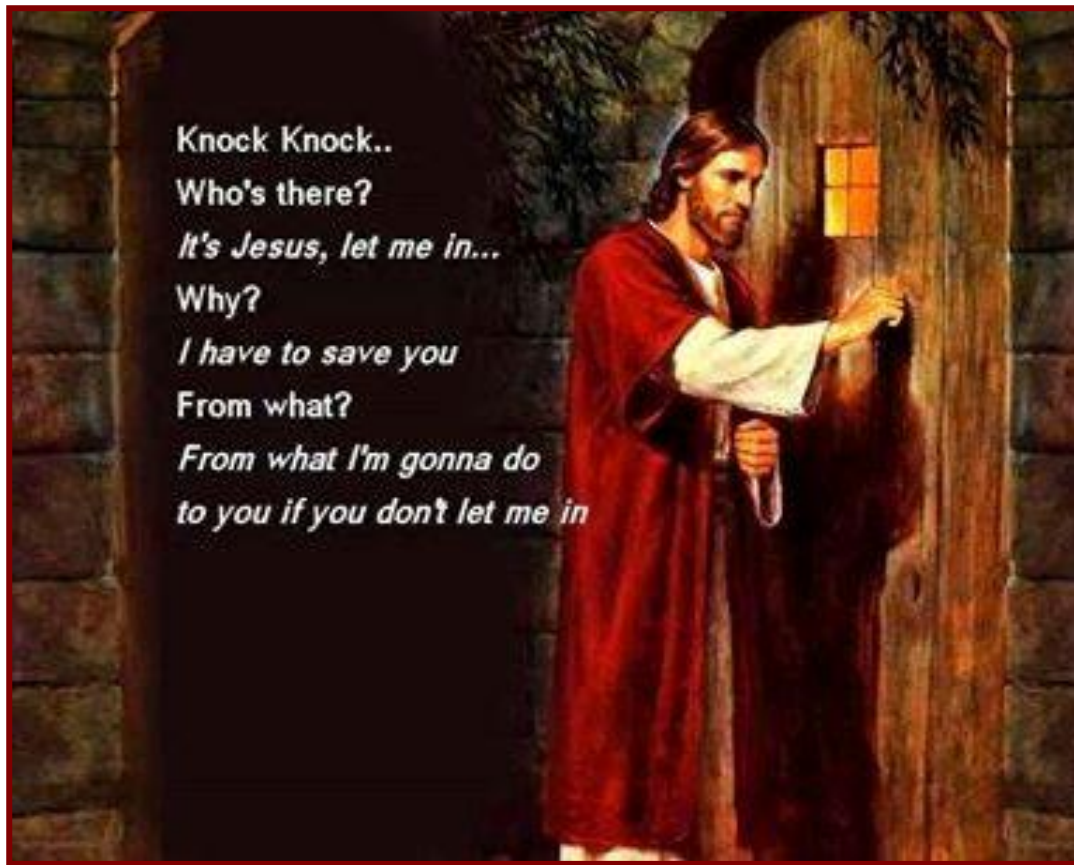
Amen ... Let it be so.

“Forgive them, Father ... for they know not what they do.”

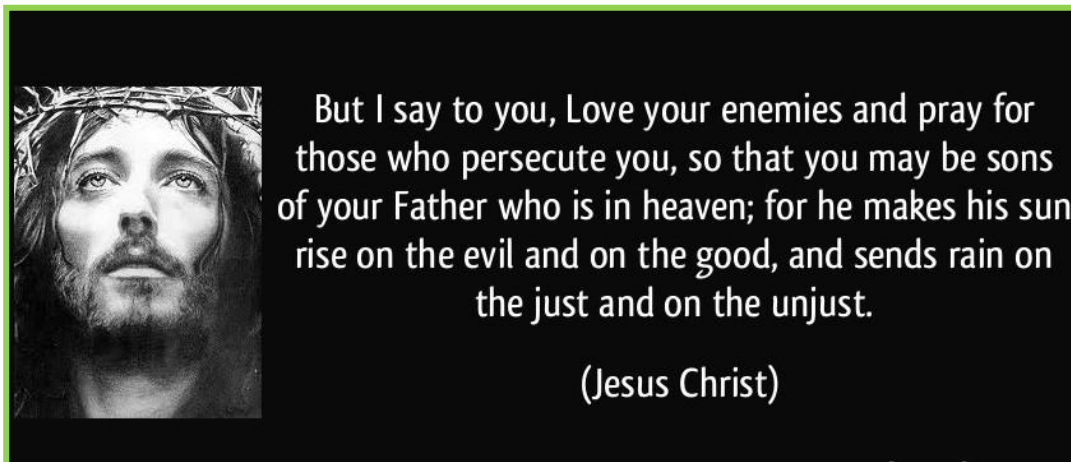
~ *Jesus Christ*, (said while nailed to the cross, no less -- see [Luke 23:34](#))



P.S. Some would have you believe that Jesus' LOVE is limited and “swordlike”; reserved for but the few who worship him “appropriately” ...



...and yet Jesus himself would have you believe otherwise ... **Peace.**

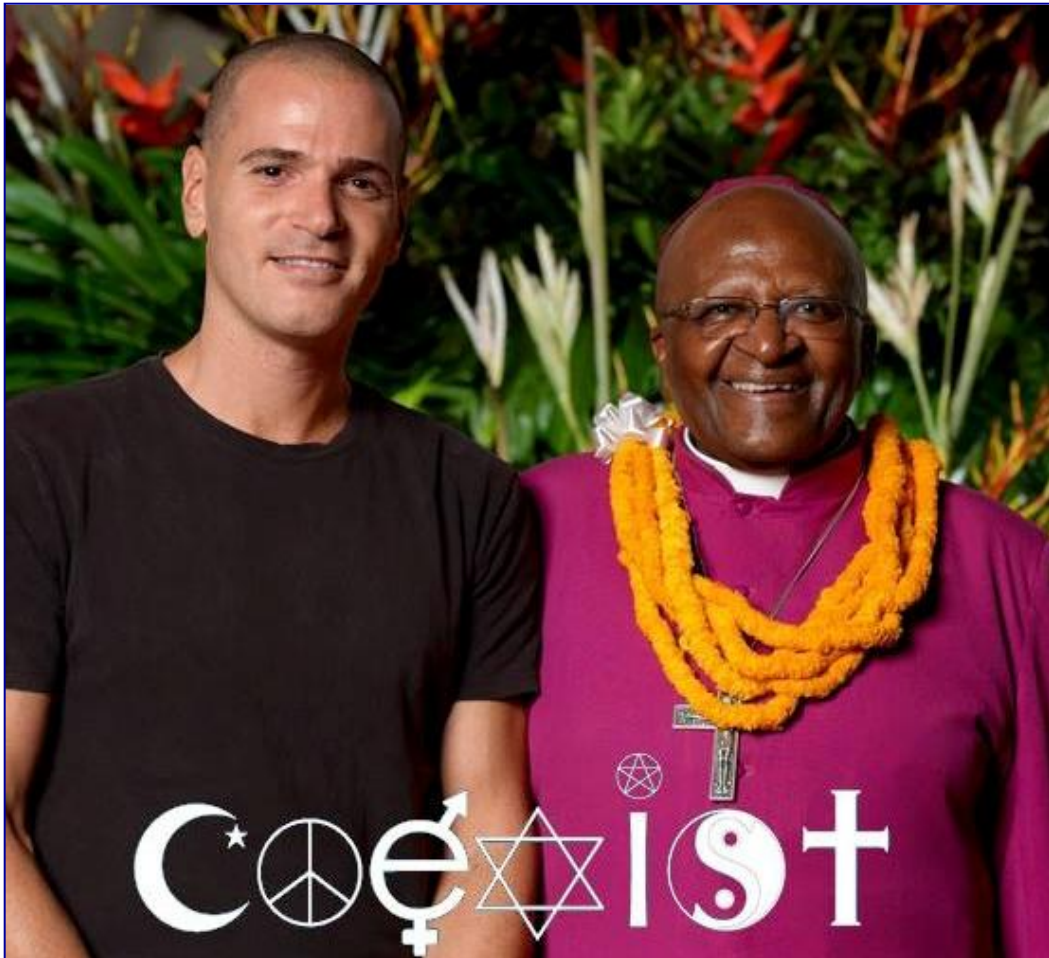


Acts 10:34-35 ... Blessed are the Peacemakers
(06/24/2015)

“Blessed are the Peacemakers ... Love your enemies.” ~ Jesus Christ

Please remember that real **LOVE is a verb** ... and please remember as well that telling someone else that they are going to Hell for their actions (“sins”) or their beliefs (“blasphemy”) is **not** very Loving -- and is certainly **not** a way to make Peace ... Indeed, even believing in or worshiping a God who would ever do such a horribly unjust & terribly cruel thing is not very Peaceful either.

“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but that in every nation anyone who honors Him by doing what is Right is acceptable to Him.”
~ Acts 10:34-35



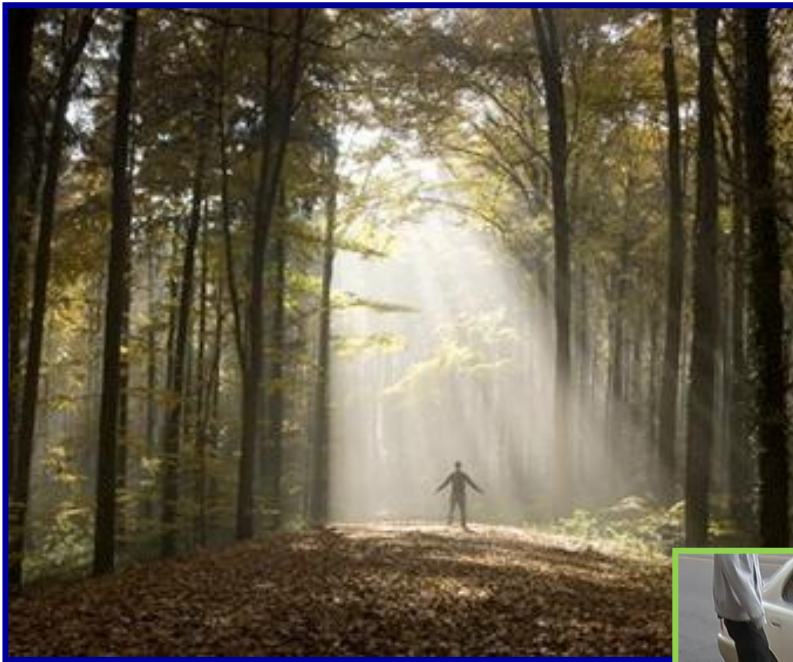
John 14:20 ... Awakening the Christ within
(06/30/2015)

There comes a moment of reawakening in the life of every person; a moment when all fear & all yearning is set aside long enough to allow a touch of the Soul to rise up into consciousness -- a moment when the Essence of the Great Divine simultaneously shines down and illuminates the shadows of “stranger” and burns through the haze of “separation”; finding its Way back into the very center of our Being; reclaiming its rightful place on our inner Throne of God.

And from the moment that Soul-glimpse meets that Light, the end is inevitable -- and that end is LOVE ... Yes, from that moment onward, though we might rail against its Call to Care, and though we might run to the ends of the Earth to keep from answering its Summons to Solidarity, that LOVE will persist in following us -- and that LOVE will eventually find us -- and that LOVE will ultimately catch us and remind us why we are here ...

... and then we will have no choice but to choose to LOVE.

(inspired by unknown)



“And on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 14:20)



Matthew 4:1-11 ... Damning the Demons
(07/13/2015)

In more than one sense, demons are quite real, for demons are but the shadows of every “angel.” And just as there are the very real angelic manifestations of Light and Kindness and Compassion and Love and Justice, so too we have the all too tangible appearances of those angels' shadows ... Indeed, each of us has experienced these different shades of darkness, so often so that we even have names for them. We call them Gloom ... We call them Greed ... We call them Callousness ... We call them Arrogance ... We call them Bigotry ... we call them Hatred ... We call them Evil.

These seven demons are indeed very real ...
... and yet they don't exist somewhere “out there.”

No, my Friends, instead they reside embedded in our physical bodies; bodies that want nothing more than to survive and know comforts & pleasures, however fleeting ... These “demons” are ingrained in our subconscious desires; yearnings to be surrounded by those like us – those who “like us” ... They are entrenched in our cultures; conventions & social norms that would have us take up arms against our enemies and cast away all others who seem “too strange” or “too dangerous” or “too unconventional” or “too heretical.”

And yet we do not have to heed the jaded whispers of those demons. We do not have to succumb to their tempting taunts of “only human” and “better than” ... We do not have to follow their teachings of hopelessness & entitlement & “healthy boundaries” & specialness ... No, my Friends, just as Jesus stood his ground against Satan himself, we too can bravely turn to face our demons. We too can answer them with Courage; with Compassion in our Hearts for the massive pain & fear in theirs ...

We can bravely call out to them,
... we can nobly deny their temptations,
... and then we can firmly bid them farewell.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(~ inspired by Matthew Fox)



“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards was famished. And the Tempter then came and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But Jesus answered, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ Then the Devil took Jesus to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the Temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written ... “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ And then for a third time, the Devil came to Jesus and took him to the top of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor; and said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’ And then the Devil departed, and angels came and cared for Jesus.” ~ Matthew 4:1-11

Matthew 18:3-4 ... becoming Again as a Child
(07/18/2015)

There is a rather intriguing passage in the New Testament where Jesus says “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom.” (Matthew 18:3-4) ... Of course, as with every other passage in the New Testament, the “Kingdom of Heaven” to which Jesus is referring here is a **Here & Now experience**; a state of indescribable Bliss that is always within us (Luke 17:20-21), ever-waiting to be accessed by courageous acts of selfless Love.

And yet this is not what is most important or even most intriguing about Matthew 18:3-4. No, what interests me the most is that the Greek word the text translates as “children” & “child” is a word that does not mean child or youth or adolescent or teen-ager, but rather – **toddler** (or very young child).

So, at least according to Jesus Christ, it is the humility of a **toddler** that is necessary to enter into the Kingdom of which he speaks. And that actually makes total sense -- at least to anyone who has spent time around such very young children. For kids at that age exude a purity of living and an intimacy of interaction with others that is truly unparalleled by any other human age-group.

***Toddlers have real Empathy** -- they truly Care for one another. When one of them cries, another comes over to provide comfort. When one of them is scared, another comes by to provide solace. When one of them is happy, others flock to join in the celebration. They cheer others' successes and they commiserate others' failures. Even though no one has taught them or told them to do so, toddlers tend to play as one team.

So let us “become humble again as a child”, my Friends ...
Today, let us choose to openly & courageously Care.



***Toddlers exude real Humility** -- they truly Accept one another. At this wonderful age of innocence, it doesn't matter whether one's playmate is a boy or a girl or a transgender; it doesn't matter whether one's playmate is black or white or Asian or Indian; it doesn't matter whether one's playmate is “good-looking” or “ugly” or “normal” or “cool”; it doesn't matter if one's playmate is a Christian or Muslim or a Buddhist or an atheist; and it doesn't matter whether one's playmate is a fellow human or a dog or a cat or a chicken or a pig. What matters is playing well together -- learning, loving, and having a good time.

So let us “[become humble again as a child](#)”, my Friends ...
Today, let us choose to be openly & courageously Accepting.



***Toddlers show real Kindness** -- they truly Love one another. Without encouragement from others and without checking to see if it is “acceptable” or “appropriate” or “popular”, little children will frequently show open expressions of fondness for one another. They forgive trespasses quickly and form deep friendships effortlessly. They receive just as much joy -- if not more -- from sharing what they have as they do from receiving what another has to give.



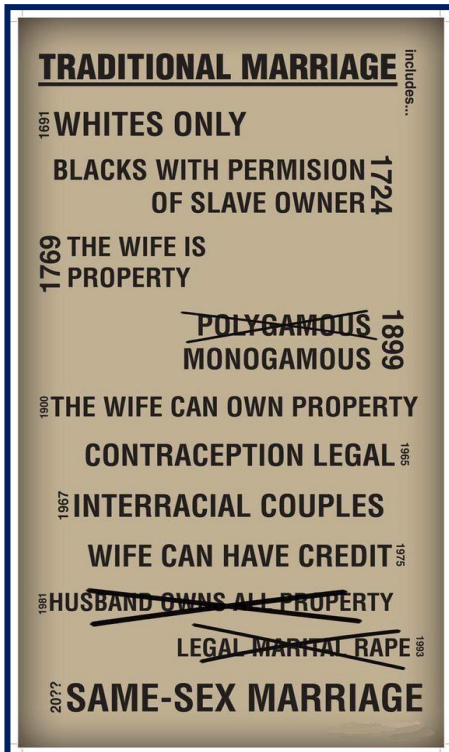
So let us “[become humble again as a child](#)”, my Friends ...
Today, let us choose to be openly & courageously Kind.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(~ inspired by Jen Cort,
& all toddlers everywhere)

Matthew 19:6 ... The REAL “traditional marriage”
(07/18/2015)

Traditionally, marriage has been recently (and quite vociferously) defined as the legal &/or spiritual union of one man with one woman – often looking something like this:



Well, guess what, folks? Marriages that are truly **traditional** have nothing at all to do with this particular vision, much less the letter of the common law or the edicts of the modern church ... That's right, true “traditional marriage” is simply a union made *privately* between two people (regardless of gender or sexual preference) who simply chose to form a day-to-day renewable life-long partnership. As such true “traditional marriages” -- the ones that actually count -- will continue to be made privately for as long as we humans reside in this Universe, and this will be the case no matter what a country's laws or what a community's church might have to say to the contrary.

Now where we start getting into trouble is when those laws &/or those churches start trying to enforce *their* beliefs about marriage onto the private marriages of others ... For **that** is discrimination; and **that** is unacceptable behavior in any truly respect-based, civilized society. Believe whatever you wish about any of the “unusual” or “alternative” or even supposedly “sinful” marriages of your neighbors -- it is most certainly your right and your prerogative to do so. **And yet** just be sure to refrain from expressing those views in public. The beliefs and actions of others that do not harm you or anyone else are NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, so please -- either openly support those unions and the Love that inspired them, or keep your less-than-kind & less-than-tolerant views to yourself.



Thank you.

P.S. As an example, I personally do not support either legal or religious marriages at all -- believing as I do that such binding unions tend to make real LOVE much more difficult to give and intimate relationships much more difficult to maintain. That having been said, when one of my Friends Joy-fully tells me that he or she is getting married, I keep my opinions to myself, give them a HUGE hug, and profusely wish them all the best.



Better yet, instead of remaining silent-yet-still-judgmentally-biased against those relationships of which you do not personally approve, why not use those encounters as opportunities to *humble your ego & open your Heart*; to extend acts of Kindness to those others -- and thereby drastically expand your own understanding of LOVE & dramatically deepen your own experience thereof?

Amen ... Let it be so.

“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what GOD [not the government or the church or even the family] has joined together; let no one separate.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:6)

And for all my conservative Christian Friends out there, try considering the fact that marriage was actually not considered a sacred institution until the Council of Verona in 1184. Before then, no specific rituals or requirements were prescribed for celebrating a marriage. Marriage vows did not have to be exchanged in a church, nor was a priest's presence required. A couple -- *any* couple -- could exchange their vows & intentions and thereby become married anywhere, anytime ... Yes, it is true that [Genesis 2:24](#) (which Jesus specifically references in [Matthew 19:6](#)) does note that “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”, and yet the Hebrew word translated here as “united” is actually *dabaq* (Strong's #1692), which meant “to cling” or “to cleave”, and had nothing to do with present day marriage whatsoever. Just as importantly, even if the Bible *did* sanctify heterosexual unions with this or any other edict, such an endorsement does **not** mean that homosexual unions are denounced or rejected. Such a negative prohibition would have to explicit to become Old Testament law, and such a prohibition does not exist in the Scriptures.

P.P.S. Here is some BONUS Bible fun -- Did you know that the ancient Hebrew manuscripts show God originally intending to make Adam a MASCULINE “helper” in [Genesis 2:18](#) (*ezer* -- Strong's #5828)? And did you know that any being cloned from the rib of a man (which is how “Eve” came to be thereafter) would have in all probability been a masculine being as well?



Matthew 20:28 ... The glory of the Son of Man
(07/18/2015)

If you want to understand what Jesus meant by “perfect LOVE”, just observe – and then emulate – the behavior of the average dog.

“Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a sacrifice for many.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 20:28)*



*By the way, contrary to popular belief, Jesus was rarely if ever referring to himself whenever he used the term “**Son of Man**” in the Gospels. Instead, he uses the term most often to refer to humanity in general (mirroring the meaning of the same term in [Job 25:6](#), [Psalm 8:4](#), [Psalm 44:3](#), [Psalm 146:3](#) & [Isaiah 51:12](#)) -- especially that mundane facet within each of us that separates us from the Divine while simultaneously serving as the witness to the rising of our Soul in those moments when we engage an act of selfless Kindness, and are thereby “**reborn**” as a Child of God (see [Matthew 16:28](#) & [Mark 14:61](#) & [Luke 12:8](#)) ... More proof of this context is seen when we realize that never once does Jesus mentions the “**Son of Man**” in any of his parables about “**the Kingdom of Heaven**” ... Finally, for all you biblical literalists out there, reading “**the Son of Man**” in this manner is seemingly the only way to reconcile the apparent falsehood uttered by Jesus in [Matthew 16:28](#) -- when he said, “**Truly I tell you, there are some standing even here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom**” ... It also lends quite the poignant & profound twist to his seemingly cryptic statement in [Matthew 9:6](#) -- when he says “**So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins**”; transforming that verse from one where Jesus appears to arrogantly exalt himself to one where he appears to encourage **all of us** to go forth into our own lives and do likewise (see also [Matthew 18:22](#)); something both the dog and the human in the image above have obviously already mastered ... **Peace**.

Matthew 18:21-22 ... Seventy times Seven
(07/25/2015)

Forgiveness is a funny thing ... We desire it deeply when we wrong another, and yet often give it unwillingly (or sometimes not at all) when we ourselves are wronged. And to make matters even more challenging, we have been taught by our parents & our teachers & our preachers & our friends to water our forgiveness down -- to thin it out to the point where it has today become almost powerless ...

Consider:

*Where pure Forgiveness means reaching out to a wrongdoer with gentle deeds of Kindness, modern-day “forgiveness” is often satisfied with weak-willed words; with a callous shrug of the shoulders and a barely audible mumble of mercy ...

*Where pure Forgiveness means humbling ourselves fully; on focusing our attention on “cleaning the inside of our own cup” and atoning for our own misdeeds, modern-day “forgiveness” often has us arrogantly standing over a wrong-doer and publicly criticizing their sins against us ...

*Where pure Forgiveness knows no limits and is repeatedly given over & over & over again -- no matter how often an “enemy” might harm or trespass against us, modern-day “forgiveness” chooses to uphold the dysfunctional principle of “healthy boundaries”; “forgiving” the same wrongdoing but a few times, and then ceasing to do so once it appears that the wrongdoer has “refused to learn their lesson.”

My Friends, if you are attaching hopes or expectations or conditions to your forgiveness, then you are not really Forgiving at all. For real Forgiveness must be fully unlimited in order to truly BE ... And as it turns out, Jesus was a champion of this Truth as well. In the Gospel of [Matthew](#), we see Peter ask Jesus the poignant question, “[Lord, if a brother sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?](#)”, whereupon Jesus gave a most insightful answer, saying “[Not only seven times \[must you forgive him\], but seventy times seven times.](#)” ([Matthew 18:21-22](#))



But what is so special about that amount? ... Well, it is interesting to note that this number only appears one other time in the entire Bible -- in [Genesis 4:24](#), where Lamech declares that his sins will be *avenged* (the opposite of Forgiveness) to the same degree. And yet we are still left to wonder why this particular number was used. Of course, “[seventy times seven](#)” for the biblical literalist simply means that we need only forgive an enemy 490 times before we can then commence blasting him for his misdeeds, and the same number for most of the rest of us merely means that we must forgive our perpetrators “a lot.” AND YET -- as is so often the case when analyzing Scripture -- the meanings behind this seemingly innocuous phrase go FAR deeper than that.

You see, in biblical manuscripts, numbers were most often used purposefully, for in Biblical times, numbers had well-known deeper meanings ... In the case at hand, “[seven](#)” was a number commonly understood to represent spiritual perfection -- or total fullness -- or completeness. As such, Peter was not asking Jesus if he was to forgive his brother seven actual times, but rather whether he was required to forgive his brother *completely* for the trespasses done against him. And Jesus response was a radical one indeed -- even by today's standards. For not only did he affirm that we are indeed to **fully** Forgive our brothers & sisters when they harm us, but that we are to Forgive *everyone* with that same completeness. For “[seventy](#)” in his answer to Peter refers to the seventy tribes of humanity mentioned in [Genesis 10](#) -- in essence; to every single person on Earth!

And this makes sense when juxtaposing Jesus' message with this particular answer ... For how are we to “[Love our enemies](#)” (and thereby “destroy” them by reconciling with them) if we are refusing to Forgive them completely? How are we to embrace others selflessly with genuine acts of Kindness if we are condemning them or criticizing them or judging them or harboring any other type of animosity towards them? Simply put, we can't ... And **that** is why it is so important for us *all* to go forth and Forgive “[seventy times seven](#)” -- *everyone* in our lives, fully & *completely* -- remembering as we do so, of course, that Forgiveness is a verb.

Amen ... Let it be so.



1 John 4:18 ... The LOVE of God
(07/27/2015)

*“There is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out fear;
for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears
has not reached perfection in Love.” ~ 1 John 4:18*

This is one of the most wise and most important verses in the entire Bible, for it relays a Truth that everyone -- Christians & non-Christians alike -- can carry with them into the rest of their lives. And that Truth is this: Real, deep-seated Peace and true, unhindered Joy are only known in those moments when we choose to Love others -- to truly **LOVE** them by caring for them actively & selflessly & unconditionally; by immersing ourselves fully in their moments, and by doing everything we can to empathize with them and bring them Calm or Happiness.

When we are judging another's sins, we are in a state of fear -- and cannot know this LOVE ... When we are frustrated by a friend's misdeeds, we are in a state of fear -- and cannot know this LOVE ... When we are scared of a stranger, we are in a state of fear -- and cannot know this LOVE ... And when we are angry at an enemy, we are in a state of fear -- and cannot know this LOVE.

The phrase “**Do not fear**” or its equivalent is mentioned over 100 times in the Bible, at least twice for every week of every year ...

... I think **LOVE is the reason** why.

Please act accordingly today ... Thank you.

Peace ... S

“I must not fear, for fear is the mind-killer & the Soul-smotherer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration to self & others. As such, today I will face my fear. I will permit it to approach me, to pass over me and to move past me. And when it has gone onward I will turn my inner eye to see its departure. And within me, where the fear has gone, there will be nothing but my true and courageous Self. Only LOVE will remain.”

~ inspired by Frank Herbert

Genesis 15:1 Genesis 21:7 Genesis 26:24 Genesis 35:7 Genesis 43:23 Genesis 46:3	FEAR NOT	Psalm 23:4 Psalm 27:1
Genesis 50:19 Genesis 50:21 Exodus 14:13 Exodus 20:20 Numbers 14:9 Numbers 21:34		Psalm 27:3 Psalm 56:4
Deuteronomy 1:21 Deuteronomy 3:2 Deuteronomy 3:22 Deuteronomy 20:1		Psalm 64:4 Psalm 118:6
Deuteronomy 20:3 Deuteronomy 31:6 Deuteronomy 31:8 Joshua 1:9 Joshua 8:1		Proverbs 31:21 Isaiah 7:4 Isaiah 10:24
Joshua 10:8 Joshua 10:25 Joshua 11:6 Judges 6:10 Judges 6:23 Ruth 3:1 I Samuel 4:20		Isaiah 35:4 Isaiah 41:10 Isaiah 41:10
I Samuel 12:20 I Samuel 22:23 I Samuel 23:17 I Samuel 28:13 II Samuel 9:7		Isaiah 40:9 Isaiah 41:13 Isaiah 42:11
II Samuel 13:28 I Kings 17:13 II Kings 1:5 II Kings 6:6 II Kings 19:6 I		Isaiah 43:5 Isaiah 44:2
Chronicles 28:20 II Chronicles 20:15 II Chronicles 20:17 II Chronicles 32:7 Job 11:5		Isaiah 44:8 Isaiah 54:4
Psalm 23:4 Psalm 27:1		Isaiah 54:14 Jeremiah 1:8 Jeremiah 10:5
Psalm 27:3 Psalm 56:4		Jeremiah 23:4 Jeremiah 30:10
Psalm 64:4 Psalm 118:6		Jeremiah 46:27 Jeremiah 46:28 Lamentations 3:57
Proverbs 31:21 Isaiah 7:4		Ezekiel 2:6 Ezekiel 3:9 Daniel 10:12
Isaiah 10:24		Daniel 10:19 Joel 2:21 Joel 2:22
Isaiah 37:6		Zephaniah 3:16 Haggai 2:5 Zechariah 8:13
Isaiah 41:10		Matthew 1:20 Matthew 10:26 Matthew 10:28
Isaiah 41:13		Matthew 10:31 Matthew 14:27
Isaiah 42:11		Matthew 17:7 Matthew 28:5 Matthew 28:10
Isaiah 43:5		Mark 5:36 Luke 6:50
Isaiah 44:2		Luke 1:13 Luke 1:30 Luke 2:10 Luke 5:10
Isaiah 54:4		Luke 8:50 Luke 12:4 Luke 12:7
Isaiah 54:14		John 6:20 John 12:15 Acts 18:9 Acts 27:24
Jeremiah 1:8		II Timothy 1:7 Hebrews 11:23
Jeremiah 10:5		Hebrews 13:6 Revelation 1:7
Jeremiah 23:4		Revelation 21:0
Jeremiah 30:10		
Jeremiah 46:27		
Jeremiah 46:28		
Lamentations 3:57		
Ezekiel 2:6		
Ezekiel 3:9		
Daniel 10:12		
Daniel 10:19		
Joel 2:21		
Joel 2:22		
Zephaniah 3:16		
Haggai 2:5		
Zechariah 8:13		
Matthew 1:20		
Matthew 10:26		
Matthew 10:28		
Matthew 10:31		
Matthew 14:27		
Matthew 17:7		
Matthew 28:5		
Matthew 28:10		
Mark 5:36		
Luke 6:50		
Luke 1:13		
Luke 1:30		
Luke 2:10		
Luke 5:10		
Luke 8:50		
Luke 12:4		
Luke 12:7		
John 6:20		
John 12:15		
Acts 18:9		
Acts 27:24		
II Timothy 1:7		
Hebrews 11:23		
Hebrews 13:6		
Revelation 1:7		
Revelation 21:0		

"The enemy is fear.
We think it is hate, but it is fear."

• Gandhi



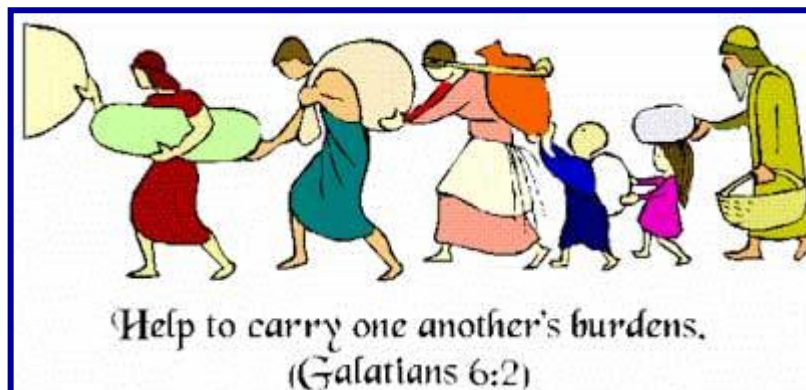
Galatians 6:2-5 ... Contradictions in Harmony (08/01/2015)

The Bible is literally filled with verses and passages and theological principles that directly contradict one another ... Quite a few of them are reconcilable (for example, the apparent contradictions in the first two chapters of [Genesis](#) are easily explained by the “fact” that [Genesis](#) describes not one Creation Event in two very different ways, but rather *two* Creation Events that happened one after the other), many of them are trivial (it doesn't really matter how Judas died -- ‘see [Matthew 27:5](#) vs [Acts 1:18](#)), some are attributable to simple scribal error (like [2 Kings 24:8](#) vs [2 Chronicles 36:9](#)) and a few of them are indeed incredibly significant (e.g. Jesus portrayed as a “God of wrath” in the book of [Revelation](#) vs Jesus seen as a gentle representative of a God of “perfect”, unconditional Love & never-ending Forgiveness in the [Sermon on the Mount](#)).

There are literally hundreds of these inconsistencies within the Bible's pages, and most of them fit into one of the first three categories mentioned above. And yet there is another class of conundrum within those ancient manuscripts -- namely, the “contradictions” that are not only *not* contradictions, but that also provide us with Great Wisdom once they are clarified ... As a prime example, I offer the following from the self-proclaimed apostle Paul: “[Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ ... For every man shall bear his own burden.](#)” ~ [Galatians 6:2](#) & [Galatians 6:5](#)

On its face, this passage seems to contradict itself -- Are we to carry others' burdens or are they to carry their own? And if others are already carrying their burdens, what is there left for us to carry?

Well, as is often the case when reading ancient texts -- especially those of the Bible -- it helps to look to the actual words used when they were “originally written”* ... In the case of [Galatians 6:2](#) & [Galatians 6:5](#), when we look to the ancient Greek used by Paul when writing this letter, two different terms were used for the commonly translated “burdens/burden” found in these two verses. In [Galatians 6:2](#), the Greek word used is *baros* (Strong's #922) -- which meant what most of us probably think it means: “weight” or “challenge” or “difficulty” or “problem.”



Galatians 6:5, on the other hand, uses the term *phortion* (Strong's #5413) -- a term which described the entire cargo contained in a ship's hold!

As such, aside from the fact that the vast majority of people will almost certainly continue to suffer from their challenges & traumas (providing us all with the opportunity to not only carry our own “burdens” but ease theirs as well), we can now clearly see that there is no contradiction here at all; that these two verses actually *work together* to give us a mini-blueprint for living a life of Meaning & Peace ... For when we insert the actual terms used in their proper contexts, this passage takes on a very different meaning -- one that can bring us great Joy & deep Contentment when put into practice -- one that sounds more like this:

“Reach out to others in their times of need -- Care for them when they are depressed and assist them when they are weary ... For in this way you will fulfill the Calling of perfect LOVE that resides within you.” ~ Galatians 6:2-5

Amen ... Let it be so.



***Note:** While the science of textual criticism has indeed advanced enough to reliably recreate a relatively accurate approximation of the Bible's original contents, not a single “original copy” of *any* of the Bible's 66 books has been recovered to date.

John 14:20-23 ... God as a Person
(08/11/2015)

Let it be known that, while I humbly set aside the notion of talking about God as a person, I have no problem whatsoever in talking about God as “*personal*” -- at least in a certain way ... Please allow me to explain:

First of all, to say that God is a separate entity – a *person* – denies all scientific evidence (Where could He be if not right Here? And why can we not ever tangibly see Him? And why does He only seem to “reveal Himself” to certain individuals in ways that are often so contradictory?). And to say that God is a separate being – divine or not – also denies consistent logic (Who created Him? And how can He exist apart from the Universe that He created? How can He exist outside of and apart from “everything”?) ... Just as importantly, to speak or think of God as a separate person is to deny the moral brilliance of all the Spiritual Masters who have come before us; teachers & sages & gurus & even scientists who seem to note without exception that an actual spark of the Divine resides within every atom in the Universe -- even *within each one of us*.

To say that God is *personal*, on the other hand -- at least in the proper context - reveals a Truth both patent & practical. For if the ultimate vision of God is an energy that is of ultimate potential, then such a Flowing Force has no choice but to encompass literally everything; It has no choice but to be a literal full embodiment of the entire Cosmos -- a pulsing expression of the Unity of matter & energy & the Oneness of all beings ...

Such a “Greater God” literally must be omnipotent (all-regulating) & omnipresent (all-infusing) & omniamorous (all-cherishing), and thus such a Divine Essence -- such a “Soul Source”; such a “Life Essence”; such a “Grace Generator” - - by its very nature cannot be separate from us at all, but is rather intrinsic & innate to every instant of our entire existence.

Indeed, without an actual ember of God glowing within our very own bodies, we would not be able to warm to the joyous movement of our living, or glow in conscious appreciation of the Beauty that surrounds us, or radiate Love via gratitude or service with our Souls ... Of course, even though such a Divine Spark cannot ever be extinguished, it must be fed to more than smolder; it must be fanned to shine brightly. And this requires us to actively & boldly embody its very Nature; with acts of selfless Love -- and deeds of random Kindness -- and expressions of heartfelt Gratitude -- and grantings of humble Mercy ... For far more than any prayer or tithe or expression of piety, *these* are the summons that reawaken our oft-slumbering Father in Heaven.

My Friends, it has taken fifteen billion years for us all to get here ... This is a scientific fact. None of us are merely the products of our parents or our upbringing. Indeed, 60% of our bodies are made up of hydrogen atoms that date all the way back to the our particular Universe's originating fireball ...

Yes, my Friends, we have truly been around for quite a long time, and we have been carrying God within us for the entirety of that great & wondrous journey. And as such, I think it's finally time for us to **start acting accordingly** – time for us to cease being mere containers of Great Sacredness, and start courageously emanating the same; to cease being mere passengers on this planet ...

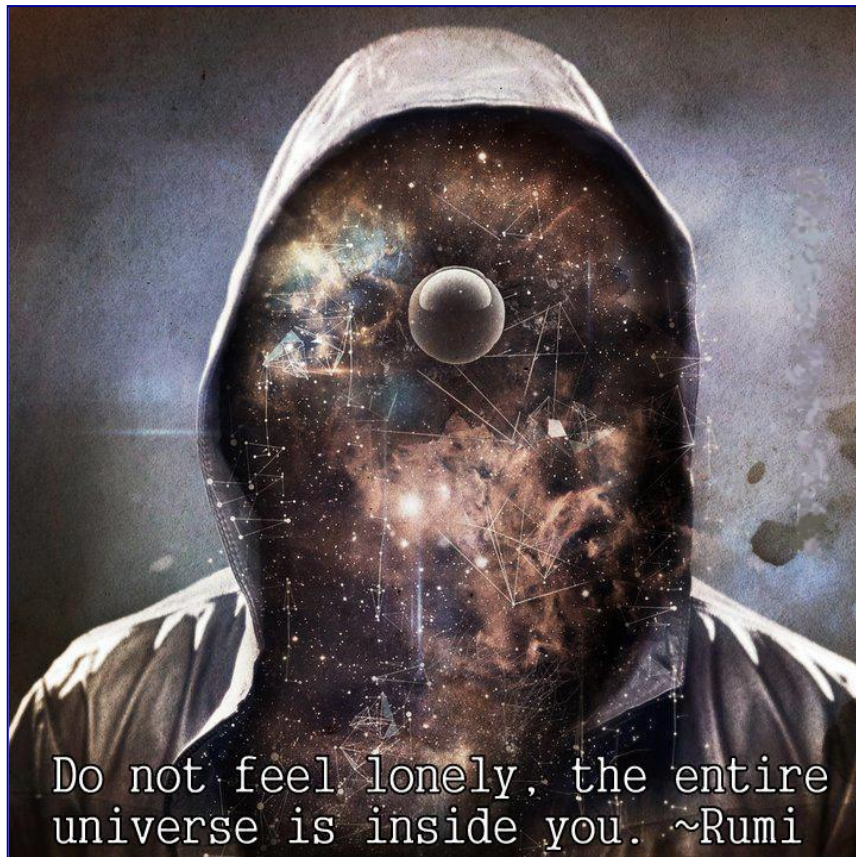
...and start acting as the gentle stewards thereof instead.

Amen ... Let it be so.

(inspired by Matthew Fox)

*“On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you. They who have received my commandments and adhere to them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father ... Those who love me **will emulate my word**, and my Father will love them, and we will both come to them and make our home within them.”*

~ Jesus Christ (John 14:20-23)



Do not feel lonely, the entire universe is inside you. ~Rumi

Luke 17:20-21 ... Knocking on Heaven's Door
(09/27/2015)

Frankly, if you want to remain in Hell, it's pretty easy to do – just keep on hoarding things ... and keep on seeking superficial pleasures ... and keep on justifying your excesses for your selfish decisions ... and keep on denigrating or ignoring the poor in your midst.

And if you want to enter more fully into life, it's not that much more difficult – just start giving away some of your things ... and start seeking contentment more than pleasure ... and start shedding a few of your personal excesses ... and start being nice to the poor in your midst.

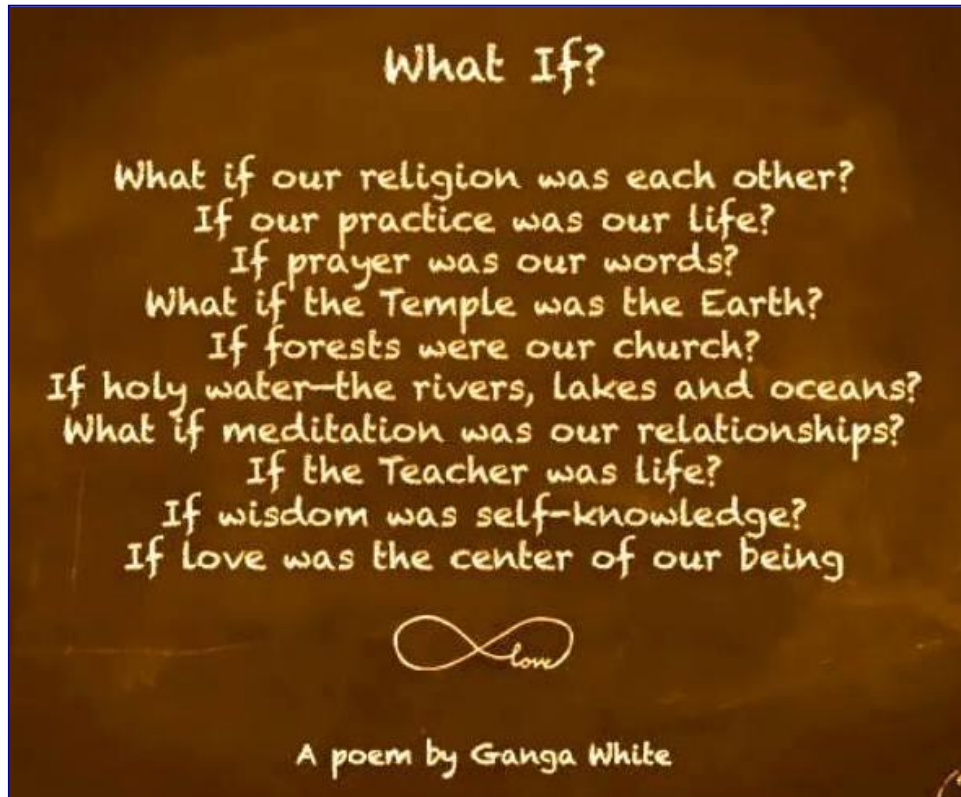
And yet if you want to get to **the Kingdom of God** -- if you want to “max out” your life as a Human Being and experience all the Bliss & all the Joy & all the Peace available to you, then you will have to do much more than that ... You will have to give food to the downtrodden when you yourself are hungry; you will have to seek to bring others Joy when you yourself are in despair; you will have to donate your time to the needy when you are already running late; you will have to go out of your way to be reverently Kind to the poor in your midst.

This is ***The Way***, my Friends ... Walk it often, and walk it well.

“The Kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they be able to say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘Look, there it is!’ For, in fact, the Kingdom of God is already within you.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 17:20-21)



Luke 6:36 ... The WHAT of every "What if"
(09/27/2015)



What if this particular poem was legit? What if this particular “What if” was real? Well -- **IT IS** ... Our life *is* our religion; our religious practice *is* how we interact with each other; the Earth *is* our holiest temple; knowing our True Self *is* knowing our greatest Wisdom; and our holiest water *is* the drought composed of the tears of our heartfelt compassion & the beads of sweat that fall whenever we serve -- tears & beads born in every river, every lake, and every ocean.

And most importantly of all, every one of these Truths blossoms into sheer **TRUTH** whenever we choose to remember that Love *is* our Being ... that Love *is* the reason why we are here.

So what if all this were true, my Friends?
... And what if you were to live your life accordingly?

Amen ... Let it be so.


“I will not execute my fierce anger ... for I Am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.” ~ Hosea 11:9

“So it is not the Will of your Father in Heaven that not even one of these little ones should be lost.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:14)


*“Be merciful with others, just as your heavenly Father is merciful with you ... Not merely seven times [shall you forgive your trespassers], but rather seventy-times-seven times ... **The Father judges no one**, but has given all judgment to the Son ... You judge by earthly standards; **I judge no one.**” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:36 + Matthew 18:22 + John 5:22 + John 8:15)*

*“For I have set you an example, that you also should **do for others** exactly as I have done to you ... If you understand these things, blessed are you **while you do them** ... A new commandment I give to you: that you **Love one another** ... **JUST AS I HAVE LOVED**, so you also are to Love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples: if you **show Love for one another.**”
~ Jesus Christ (John 13:15-17 + 34-35)*

“GOD” Loves EVERYBODY,



Whether YOU Like it or Not!
...or Believe in their Version of it all...



When it comes Down to it, We are **All Children** of the **Same Universe.**

♥ ...And No Matter How you want to say it, It is Time to

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Philippians 4:4 ... Re-JOY-cing in the Lord
(09/27/2015)

It's not that often that Jesus and Paul fully agree on anything within the texts of the Bible, and yet every now and then it happens ... Yes, half of these harmonies appear to be Paul accidentally stumbling upon the Divine Truth espoused by Jesus, and yet Paul was nothing if not persistent, so it really can't be a great surprise to anyone that he -- just like the rest of us "normal folks" bumbling our way through life -- occasionally reached out into the darkness of his ignorance to touch the Greatness that was The Way of Christ; that he too sometimes clambered through the haze of his own insecurities to inadvertently caress the sheer wonderment that is Jesus' Way of selfless LOVE.

And [Philippians 4:4](#) seems to be just one of those glorious "accidents" -- the one where Paul stumbles onto the Purpose of Joy ... OK, Paul put the focus of Joy on worshiping God via praise & prayer as opposed to deeds of selfless Kindness & humble self-sacrifice, and Paul didn't understand that "the Lord" (a.k.a. God) was in reality the perfect LOVE that is numinously incarnate within all of us (see [1 John 4](#)), and yet we can give him the benefit of the doubt nonetheless.

Either way, real Joy has now been re-exposed via this verse; re-exposed as one of the most powerful ways for you to find your way "back to God." And as such I humbly encourage (read: in-Courage) you to go forth today and **revel accordingly!**

Amen ... Let it be so.

*"Rejoice in the Lord, always. I say it again: **Rejoice!**" ~ [Philippians 4:4](#)*

"I have said all these things to you so that my Joy might be in you, and that your Joy may become complete." ~ [Jesus Christ \(John 15:11\)](#)



Matthew 7:1-5 ... a bit of inspirational irony
(10/11/2015)

Are you one of those people calling for others to “obey Jesus” while criticizing the ways & beliefs of those you feel don't do so? Seriously? ... Fair enough ... How about before you do so again, please look in the mirror and try these verses on for size first, ok?

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.” ~ Jesus (Matthew 7:1-2)

*“Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own? ... You hypocrite! First **take the log out of your own eye**, and then you will see clearly enough to remove the speck from your neighbor's.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:3-5)*

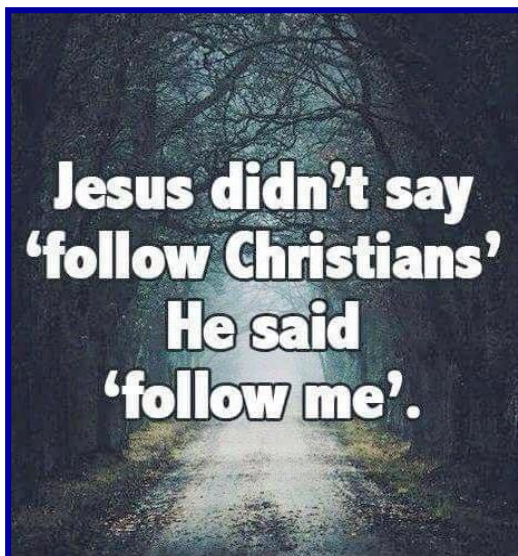
*“You hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup [of others], but inside are full of greed and self-indulgence ... First **clean the inside of your own cup**, so that the outside may also then become truly clean.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:25-26)*

*“Truly I tell you, unless you change and **become like young children**, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this small child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:3-4)*

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 8:7)

*“If you keep **MY** commandments, you will abide in my Love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his Love ... And this is **MY** commandment: that you **Love one another** just as I have Loved you.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 15:10-12)*

Amen, my fundamentalist Friends ...Let it be so!!!!



Hosea 11:9 ... our God of LOVE
(10/18/2015)

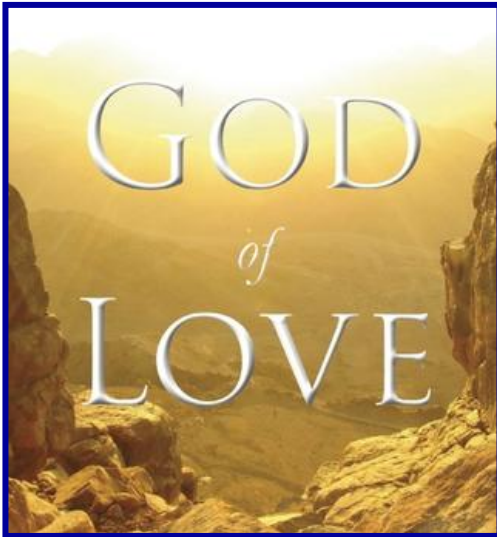
The Best of News: God is a pretty Good Guy
(... And by the way -- there is no Hell.)

Seeing as how it's Sunday, and quite a few of you (especially over there in the United States) will be heading to church right about now, I thought I would put in a **Good Word** -- for Christians & non-Christians alike -- by reminding everyone that, at least according to at least one equally valid reading of the Bible, God (if He indeed exists) is actually a pretty nice guy – and as such is not really into damning or judging or even punishing us humans at all.

As such, I just thought you'd like to know that not only do you **not** have to worry about going to Hell after you die (Heck, even if you do end up there, you are going to be in *fantastic* company), but that you also do **not** have to waste your time worrying about being judged or condemned or even reprimanded as a “sinner” before you do so ...

So just get out there and use the time you have to be the best and the most Kind and the most Giving person you can be!

Amen ... Let it be so.



*“I will not execute my fierce anger ...
For I am God and no mortal, the Holy One
in your midst, and **I will not come in wrath**”
~ Hosea 11:9*

*“Now he is God not of the dead, but of
the living; and to Him **all of them** are alive.”
~ **Jesus Christ** (Luke 20:38)*

P.S. For anyone out there needing more biblical proof of the aforementioned, feel free to consider the following:

*“O [God] who answers prayer; to You **all flesh shall come.**” ~ Psalms 65:2*

*“I will put my law within them’, saith the Lord, ‘and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest ... For I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sin no more.” ~ Jeremiah 31:33-34*

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven; for He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on both the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you only Love those who love you, what reward do you have? ... Be perfect [in Love], therefore, just as your heavenly Father is perfect [in Love] ... There is no fear in Love, but perfect Love casts out all fear. For fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in Love.” ~ Matthew 5:48 + 1 John 4:18

*“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and **all the families of the nations** shall worship before him” ~ Psalms 22:27*

*“The LORD is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast Love. The LORD is good to all, and His compassion is **over all that He has made.**” ~ Psalms 145:8-9*

*“On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make **for all peoples** ... And He will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast **over all peoples**, the sheet that is spread **over all nations**. He will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears **from all faces**, and the disgrace of His people He will take away **from all the Earth.**” ~ Isaiah 25:6-8*

*“At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that **all of them** may call on the name of the LORD and serve Him with one accord.” ~ Zephaniah 3:9*

“So it is not the will of my Father in Heaven that even one of these little ones should be lost.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:14)

*“For **everyone** will be salted with fire.” ~ Jesus Christ (Mark 9:49)*

*“And **all flesh** shall see the salvation of God” ~ Luke 3:6*

*“The true light, which lights up **everyone**, came into the world.” ~ John 1:9*

*“It is written in the prophets, ‘And **they shall all be taught by God.**’ Indeed, **everyone** who has heard and learned from the Father [ultimately] comes to me.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 6:45)*

*“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. And then **there will be one flock**, with one shepherd.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 10:16)*

*“And I, once I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all people** to myself.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 12:32)*

*“I do not judge **anyone** who hears my words and does not keep them; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 12:47)*

*“For God has imprisoned **all** in disobedience, that he may be **merciful to all**.” ~ Romans 11:32*

*“Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they [**all**] will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.” ~ Romans 14:4*

*“He has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time; **to gather up all things** in Him, the things in Heaven and the things on Earth.” ~ Ephesians 1:9-10*

*“For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation to all**.” ~ Titus 2:11*



2 Timothy 1:7 ... Conquering with LOVE (10/24/2015)

It has been said that the Bible admonishes us to “**be not afraid**” 365 times in total -- once for every day of the year, and yet it turns out that this is not quite true (the King James Bible apparently states “**fear not**” or its equivalent 103 times, while some researchers have found other translations to cite this particular encouragement anywhere from 200 to 334 times) ... Of course, how many times the Bible (or any other spiritual tome) tells us to avoid fear is not nearly as important as the Truth that fear is without a doubt the enemy of all enemies. If fear is allowed into life, it becomes the shadow that darkens any hope and the fog that chills any Love.

And we are all programmed to fear first -- to assume danger before any deed of dignity, and to assume the other is an enemy before every eventual embrace. In Truth, it is fear that is at the center of most of our moments of despair, just as it is fear that keeps us from Caring for others.

So how can we defeat this greatest menace? How can we set fear aside -- keep it tucked away in its proper place; hidden & secondary? Well, as it turns out, even though the Bible does not tell us 365 times to “fear not”, it *does* have quite a few interesting things to say about fear; subtle yet powerful things that most of you probably have not yet heard ...

Please consider:

*First of all, [Psalm 112:1](#) displays a common Old Testament admonition when it tells us that “**Happy are those who fear the Lord**” ... Of course, when we read “fear” in such passages traditionally -- as “worry” or “nervousness” or “angst” or even “terror”, we end up directly contradicting the Wisdom found in [Matthew 5:48](#) (the verse which tells us that God is the essence of perfect LOVE) and [1 John 4:18](#) (the verse which tells us that perfect LOVE knows **no fear** at all) ... Fortunately for all biblical literalists, the Hebrew word for “fear” in the relevant Old Testament passages is **not** any manifestation of our modern-day definition of “fear” at all, but rather means “**in wonderment of**” or “**awed by**” or “**having immense reverence for.**”



*Next, we can then turn to the well-known verse of [Psalm 23:4](#), which states “[Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil](#)” ... While most of us have heard this verse a number of times over the course of our lives, an invaluable Truth that many of us have missed therein is that the speaker is *walking* through his/her fear -- he is *in motion*; she *is active* ...

And Jesus himself echoed this sentiment repeatedly during his subsequent ministry, when he continually encouraged us to **not** passively worship him, but rather to actively *follow* him -- **not** to sing hollow praises in the hopes of attaining personal rewards or accolades, but rather to *make LOVE a verb* by emulating his Way of Loving others. (see [John 13:15-17](#) + [John 13:34-35](#))

*And finally, we can unearth the hidden Truth that tells us *HOW* we are to walk that Love when we look to [Isaiah 41:13](#) (which just so happens to be the work of “Isaiah II” -- the author of [Isaiah 40-55](#); the Old Testament scroll that Jesus seemed to adore above all others) -- averse which says, “[For I, the Lord your God, hold your RIGHT HAND. It is I who say to you, 'Do not fear'](#)” ...

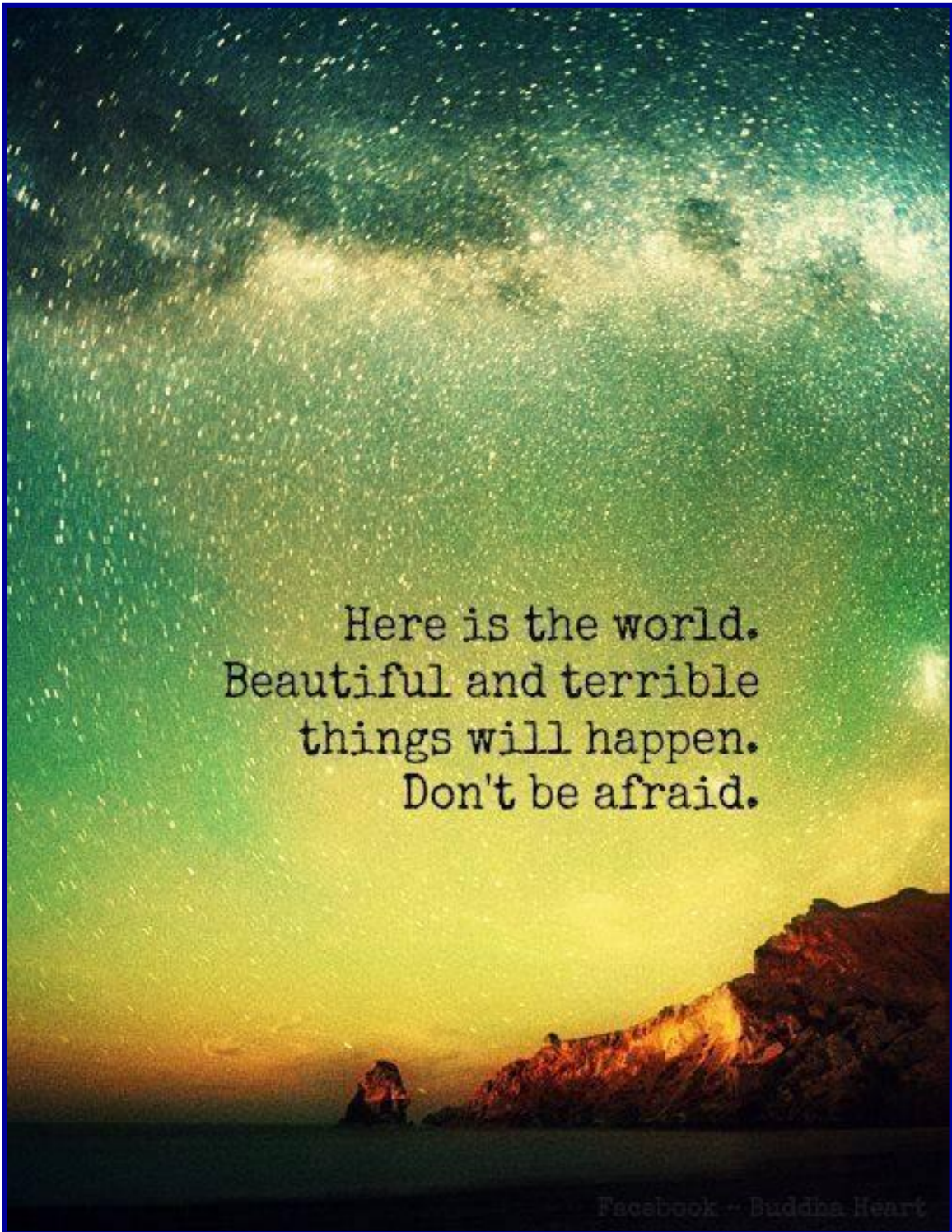
You see my Friends, for the spiritual authors & religious leaders of Jesus' day, the Right Hand had a special, well-known meaning. It was considered to be the hand of Giving -- the hand of Loving -- the hand of selfless Service! And as such *this* is the way we are supposed to live with others, and *this* is the way we are supposed to honor God (in whatever form, by whatever name), and *this* is the way we are to conquer fear -- by reaching out to others with courageous, selfless acts of Generosity of goods & Charity of time & Service of self & Kindness of Spirit ...

This is the way we have a Spirit of true Power ...

This, my Friends, is the way we follow The Way!

Amen ... Let it be so.

“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of Power and of Love and of Authenticity.” ~ 2 Timothy 1:7



Here is the world.
Beautiful and terrible
things will happen.
Don't be afraid.

Facebook - Buddha Heart

John 14:13-14 ... Attaining real Prosperity
(a.k.a. *Getting prayers Answered*)
(11/11/2015)

Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland and Joyce Meyer are just a few of the leaders in a popular religious movement many call “The Prosperity Gospel” – a movement centered around the belief that if you sacrifice for God (preferably in the form of irresponsibly large monetary tithes given to these same “prophets of profit”) then God will eventually bless you in return with a far greater material abundance & a far deeper emotional comfort. Of course, what happens in almost all cases is these “false friars” end up getting perversely wealthy while the poor folks who support their gargantuan greed and finance their obscene opulence end up suffering greatly ...

It really is enough to make any decent & moral person's blood boil.

Well, in order to do my small part in seeing that this particular injustice is ultimately destroyed, I thought I would shed some light upon a few of the more common Biblical deceptions used by these “warlocks of wealth”, and I'll start with the Gospel of [John](#) ...

One of the favorite passages these “denizens of the dollar” like to use to prove their point is found in [John 14:13-14](#), where Jesus says, “[I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it](#)” ... Now on its face, I must admit that these two verses do indeed seem to promise a straight up, tit-for-tat system of rewarding those who invest in the church, *and yet* what Mr. Osteen & Mr. Copeland & Ms. Meyer forget to tell us is that Jesus is **not** telling us here that we will receive anything & everything we ask for (Jesus was, after all, **not** a fan of material wealth *at all* -- see [Matthew 19:21-24](#)), but rather only what we ask for “**IN HIS NAME**” -- namely, in **JESUS'** name -- namely, in the name he was originally given -- namely, in a way that harmonizes with the *meaning* of that name ... And in the beginning, Jesus' name was said to have been “**Emmanuel**” (see [Matthew 1:23](#)); a name that meant “**God is with us**” -- or, as Jesus himself would have said: “**God is *withIN* us**”! (see [Luke 17:20-21](#) + [John 14:20](#))

As such, at least according to Jesus Christ, it is not the prayer where we ask for individual reward or personal comfort that will be answered and fulfilled, but rather the prayer that asks that we become of a beacon of Love for those who are in fear -- or the prayer that asks that we become a source of Peace for those who are in distress -- or the prayer that asks that we become a foundation of Courage for those who are abused &/or in pain.

In essence then, our prayers will only be answered -- and they will *always* be answered -- when we pray to be of service to those in need. And the greatest reward we could ever hope for will *always* be showered upon us -- FROM WITHIN -- when we act accordingly thereafter.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Men talk about the Bible and God and meaning and miracles solely because there are no miracles and there is little meaning in their lives. Cease to gnaw on that crust, my Friends. There is ripe fruit over your heads, and fresh bread always nearby.” ~ inspired by Henry David Thoreau



1 John 4:7-8 ... No If's, And's or But's
(01/23/2016)

We are told by more than a few folks that “God is Love”, and this is no mere “New Age foof”, for the Bible itself comes right out and clearly says the same thing -- Consider: “Everyone who Loves is born of God and knows God, and whoever does not Love does not know God; for **GOD IS LOVE.**” ~ 1 John 4:7-8 ... And yet quote this verse to conservative Christians (which is actually an oxymoron, but I digress) and the “Yeah, but” excuses start flying with vehemence & vigor, such as:

“Yeah, but we can't always be perfect ...” or
“Yeah, but the Old Testament says ...” or
“Yeah, but the terrorists last week ...” or
“Yeah, but Paul says in Romans ...” or
“Yeah, but we must ‘weed our garden’ first.”

And to all these feeble cop-outs I humbly & simply say --
no ... no ... No ... No ... & **NO!!!**

We humans have this irritating tendency to receive Divine Truths and then follow them only up the point they become uncomfortable. Then the excuses and the boundaries and the limitations and the rationalizations come out and whittle those Truths down to where they lose all their Power and become devoid of most of their Meaning ... We choose convenience over courage and selfishness over sanctity ... We choose comfort over consequence and ease over ethics.

We do so to justify condemning those we don't like, we do so to “defend ourselves” against those we fear (which always ultimately backfires, by the way), and we do so to shield ourselves from having to reach out with acts of bold & noble self-sacrifice ... And yet that is **not** what LOVE is all about, my Friends -- and, especially important for all Christians, that is **NOT** the Way of Jesus Christ!

God -- at least the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ -- is **not** angry, He is merciful ([Luke 6:36](#)) ... He is not vengeful; He is forgiving ([John 5:22](#) + [Matthew 18:21-22](#)) ... He is not a God of punishment, but a God of perfect, unconditional, never-ending Caring for *all* His children ([Matthew 5:48](#) + [1 John 4.18](#)) ... To worship anything less is fine, of course. And yet to worship anything less is to worship a lesser God -- and to worship anything less is **NOT** to worship the God of Jesus!

Call me a blasphemer or label me a heretic if you wish (Jesus himself was often called worse), and yet I will go to my grave championing the **GREATEST LOVE** --- a Divine Love -- a Love that knows no limitations & sets no boundaries -- a Love that has the courage to stand between an enemy and his intended victims with Forgiveness for him on my lips and Love for him in my Heart ... For *this* is the LOVE that God is made of -- and *this* is the LOVE that we *all* have been called to emulate & enliven.

So for me, when the Bible (or any other holy tome, for that matter) says “**God is Love**”, I take it quite literally ... I won't water it down and I won't cut off its corners -- I will see Him (or Her, or It) as **LOVE**, period ... And when the Bible (or any other sacred book) tells me to “**Love my enemies**”, I take that quite literally as well. There will be no “Yeah, but” coming from my lips, and there will be no exceptions as to whom I choose to give that perfect **LOVE**.

For God to be worthy of worship, He must be more than an Essence of “Love, but” or “Love, maybe” or “Love, if deserving” ... For God to be worth worshipping, He must be composed of raw, pure, unadulterated, perfectly exceptionless **LOVE** -- period!

And for me to then worship Him effectively & devoutly, I have no choice but to **act accordingly** -- by having the courage to act similarly.

Peace to ALL ... S

(inspired by Benjamin L. Corey
& Vanessa Curley)

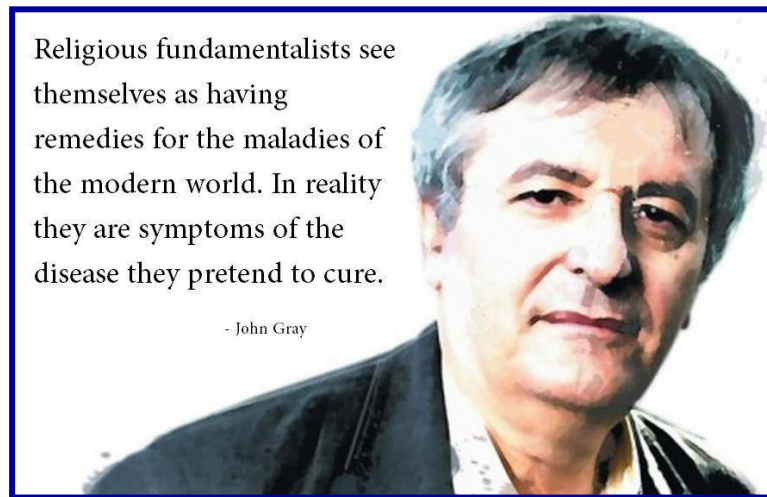
“There is only love, and the absence of love. In other words, there is love, and then there are all the things that God is not. Fear, hate, prejudice, judgment, condemnation do not come from love, and therefore do not come from God. They are what we're left with when we cut ourselves off from love; when we cut ourselves off from God.” ~ inspired by Chris Broughton



Matthew 18:3-4 ... Symptoms of the Cure
(01/17/2016)

*“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like young children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever **becomes humble** like this young child is the greatest in the Kingdom.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:3-4)*

(“This pretty much nails it.” ~ Jesus Christ)



Matthew 25:40 ... Caring carelessly
(01/26/2016)

“We have allowed the Enemy to come into our churches. I was talking to some Christians and they were talking about how they invited these gay children to come into their home and to come into the church and that they were wanting to influence them. And I thought to myself, they’re not going to influence those kids; those kids are going to influence those parent’s children. What happens is we think we can fight by smiling and being real nice and loving. We have to understand who the Enemy is and what he wants to do. He wants to devour our homes. He wants to devour this nation and we have to be so careful who we let our kids hang out with. We have to be so careful who we let into the churches. You have immoral people who get into the churches and it begins to effect the others in the church and it is dangerous.” ~ Franklin Graham



As I ponder this **outrageously immoral statement**, I find myself sincerely wondering whether Franklin Graham has ever read the New Testament at all, because in a sour twist of irony, his was the very same attitude of the religious leaders of Jesus’s day – the very same attitude of Jesus’ *opponents* (and the only group of people whose sins Jesus publicly rebuked)!

Like Graham, those same leaders couldn’t fathom why Jesus preferred the company he kept; why he included the excluded; why he pushed back so hard when they questioned his doing so ... Though I have my (admittedly unflattering) theories as to why Franklin Graham feels our homosexual children are “the enemy” and need to be excluded from our lives, I cannot be sure of the same. All I **do** know is that his is *a destructive belief* that produces horrible fruit, and that it is a belief that is most certainly **NOT** rooted in the tradition of Jesus of Nazareth.

(inspired by Benjamin L. Corey)

John 18:37-40 ... Still asking for Barabbas
(03/25/2016)

“And Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, 'So are you a king?' And Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king, but not I. For I was born to testify to the Truth, and to testify to the Truth I came into the world. Everyone who follows the Truth listens to my voice.’ And Pilate asked Jesus, ‘What is truth?’ ... And after he had asked this, he went out again to the Jews gathered below and told them, ‘I find no case against [Jesus]. And yet there is a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release Jesus for you?’ And those gathered there shouted in reply, ‘Not Jesus, but Barabbas!’ Barabbas, who was a bandit.”
~ John 18:37-40

So here we are on our next Good Friday, roughly 2013 years after this most momentous instant in human history; this infamous flash of opportunity where humanity had the choice between awakening to a Jesusian Society founded in selfless LOVE & humble Respect, or sinking into our next Dark Epoch of wickedness & corruption & despair ... Of course, we all know how the story ended, we all know that our forefathers chose the latter, and we all know that our species has suffered immensely ever since as a result.

And yet what baffles me to no end is how so many Christians -- in a less-than-delicious display of irony -- are still denying the teachings of their Christ; how so many of them are still in effect “asking for Barabbas” to this very day.

*Indeed, instead of asking for Jesus in the form of giving to the poor, so many Christians “ask for Barabbas” by opening savings accounts while ignoring the homeless in their midst.

*And instead of asking for Jesus in the form of forgiving those who have trespassed against them, many Christians “ask for Barabbas” by gossiping about those they least like &/or denigrating those who gossip about them.

*And instead of asking for Jesus in the form of being consciously Kind to their sentient cousins, many Christians “ask for Barabbas” by stuffing their faces with the tortured flesh of innocent animals and filling their stomachs with their secretions raped & stolen.

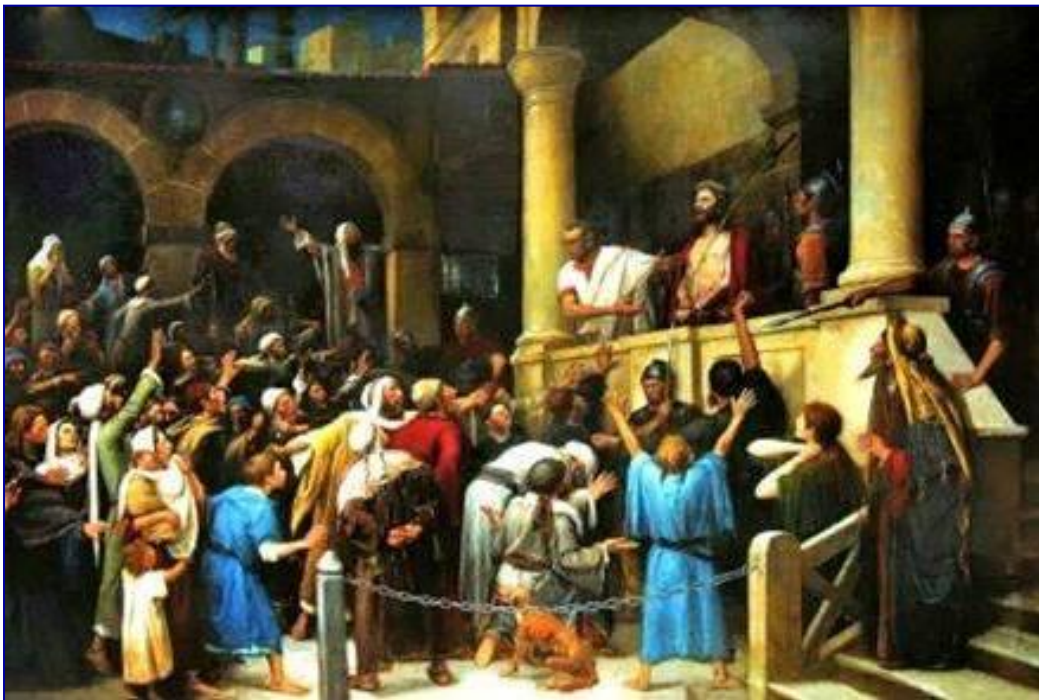
*And instead of asking for Jesus in the form of reaching out to their enemies (these days, most ostensibly Muslims), many Christians “ask for Barabbas” by calling Muslims “Muzzies” -- or punching their faces -- or threatening them with deportation -- or demanding that they & their families be hunted down & killed.

Yes, these are sad times to be sure, my dear Friends, and it is ever-so-clear that we humans are still deeply mired in an Age that is quite Dark & morosely foreboding indeed ... And yet our hope rests in the fact that this darkness is essentially 100% of our own making -- and as such, this same darkness can be dispelled by our hands as well.

And to do so, we *all* -- regardless of our religious beliefs (or lack thereof) -- simply have to **stop choosing Barabbas** in our everyday lives; and have the raw faith & immense courage to enliven The Way of Jesus Christ instead.

Amen --- Please let it be so.

*“But I say to you that listen, **Love your enemies**, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. **Give to everyone** who asks of you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, **expecting nothing in return**. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. **Be merciful**, just as your Father is merciful.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:27-36)*



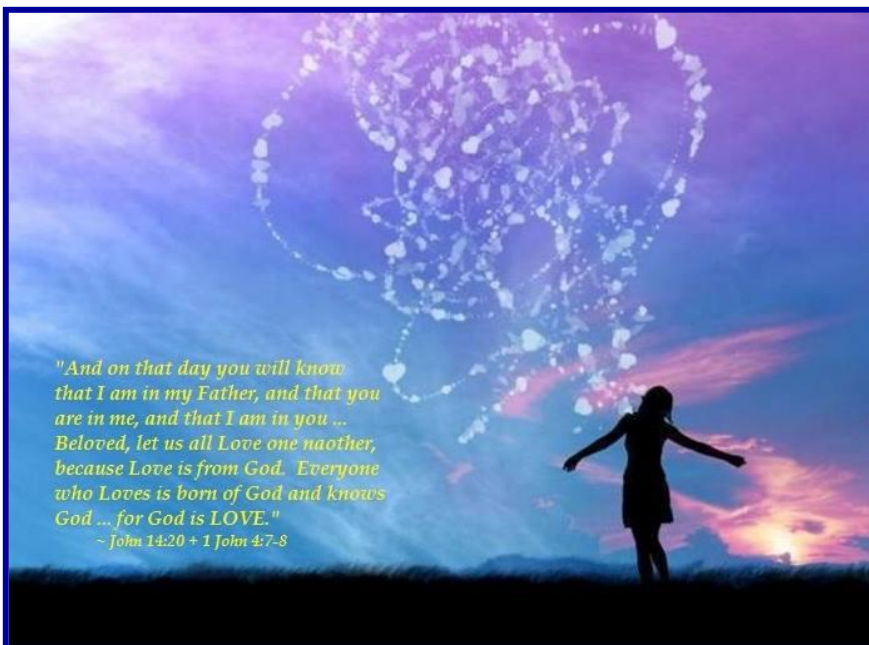
John 3:8 ... Diving into Devotion (03/26/2016)

Deep-seated & lasting PEACE comes to each & every one of us in all our moments of true Devotion — but not the mere “devotion” we might give to a relationship or to a job or to a cause or to a belief or to an ideal. Rather, real PEACE comes to us when we are Devoted **to the entirety of the Universe** – when we are Devoted to the greatest Gift ever bestowed — when we are Devoted to everything living — when we are Devoted *to life itself*.

It is not a pilgrimage, this Devotion; not a journey towards “enlightenment” ... Nor is it a journey with “salvation” waiting at its eventual end destination. Rather, it is simply choosing to actively set aside all the boundaries that divide you from the Universe around you ... It is – for one perfect moment – having the courage to open up to the joys & sorrows of those nearby, and then having the courage to fully immerse yourself in the same.

In this sense, devotion is a LOVE affair of the highest order ... It is the deepest intimacy possible between two beings — a LOVE so deep that their two hearts start pulsing to the same rhythm; begin swaying to the same celestial melody ... More than the mere “love” normally expressed between individuals, the LOVE of true Devotion connects one person not solely with another, but rather with the whole of Existence ... Devotion dances in the waves of the ocean by cherishing clean water ... Devotion dances with the swaying trees by protecting the sanctity of Nature ... and Devotion dances with other beings by seeking to lessen their pain — with a gentle smile, with a kind word, with open arms; by respecting THEIR lives as if they were your own ... The Heart soaked in Devotion responds reverently to

the sweet fragrance of the flowers, sings joyfully to the lilting hymns of the birds, and laughs playfully with the raucous antics of all animals. It stands Thank-fully in the warmth of every sunrise, and it sits Peace-fully under the halcyon brilliance of every night sky.



And Devotion is also the embrace of death – or at the very least the gentle embracing of all that are ready to die so that LOVE may live on in their place ... Indeed, true Devotion is bravely casting aside all that which is mortal within you – all your fears, all your lusts, all your hopes, even all your presumed needs ... And Devotion is replacing those yearnings with one perfect moment — always **THIS** moment — a moment that is fully & completely dedicated to the well-being of others And once your life is completely given over in this manner, then only the immortal remains — only the eternal — only the deathless.

And **THIS** pure Devotion to life & living is what it means to be “born anew” ... And it is a rebirth that requires neither struggle nor strife. It is in-deed natural & fluid, this awakening of one’s true Being. For those so “deathless” cannot remain long separated from the Divine that surrounds them – from the Divine within the Cosmos from which Love itself arose; the Divine Cosmos itself whose very nature is always deathless ... always ongoing ... always shifting ... ever rebirthing itself ... The Universe, like each & every moment within it – like the energy in every ray of sunshine and the consciousness within you & every other sentient being around you, knows no beginning ... and therefore knows no end.

And true Devotion – this real Faith in what many call “God” – is simply living accordingly; simply loving radically & loving courageously; simply cherishing each moment of your priceless life by doing whatever you can -- be it the smallest of gestures or the greatest of sacrifices -- to bring Joy & Harmony to anyone nearby.

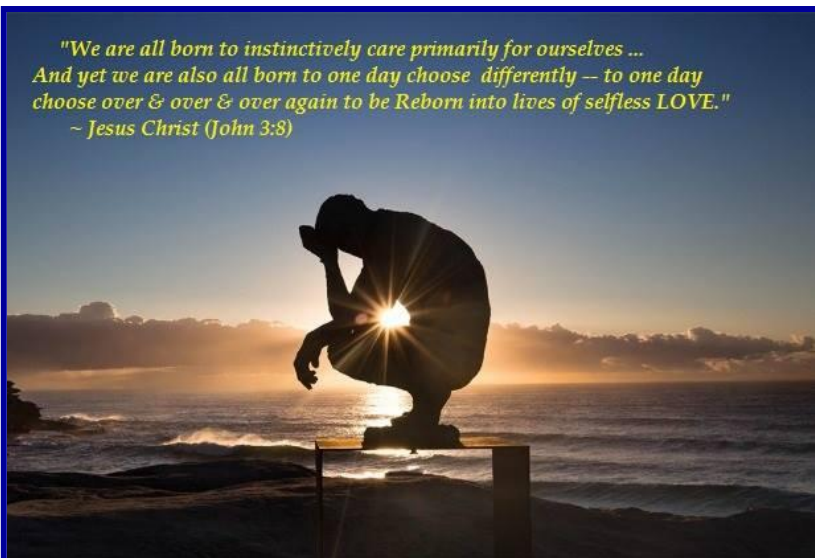
And **THIS** is what it means to “be saved” ...

And **THIS** is what it means to “worship the Father” ...

And **THIS** is what it means to “do God’s Will” ...

... For **THIS** is what it means ---- to LOVE!

(inspired by Jesus Christ)



*"We are all born to instinctively care primarily for ourselves ...
And yet we are also all born to one day choose differently -- to one day
choose over & over & over again to be Reborn into lives of selfless LOVE."
~ Jesus Christ (John 3:8)*

*"The wind blows
where it chooses, and
you hear the sound of
it, but know not from
where it comes or to
where it goes. So it is
with everyone who is
reborn of the Spirit."
~ Jesus (John 3:8)*

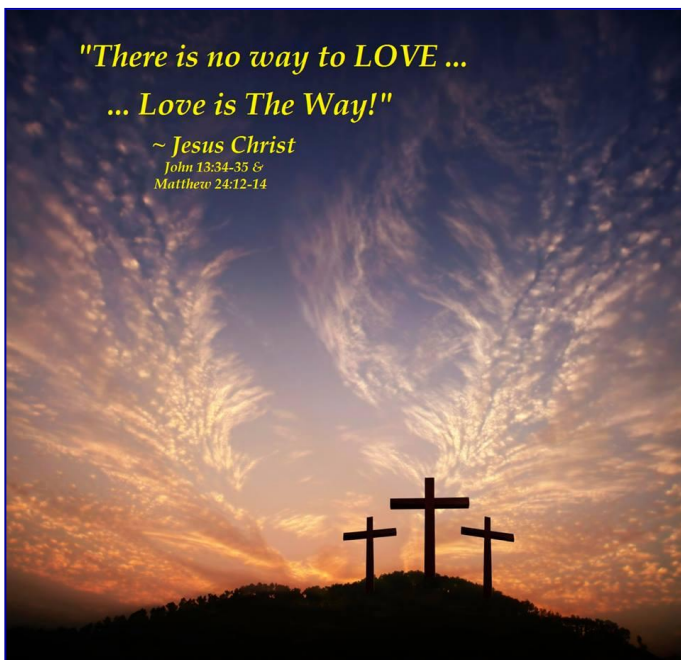
Matthew 24:12-14 ... Walking HIS Way
(03/27/2016)

Especially around this time of the year, a lot of folks keep getting confused about that thing called “The Gospel” ... Indeed, most of the Christians I know -- in full harmony with the many teachings of the self-proclaimed “apostle” Paul -- make Easter weekend a celebration about Jesus himself; about his life and his death and his resurrection. And most of them celebrate this way -- quite unabashedly, I might add -- because they believe that his resurrection means theirs as well; that Easter as such is not about what Jesus had to say or about how Jesus wanted us to live, but rather becomes about one's own rewards and one's own benefits and one's own “eternal salvation.”

Well this is all fine & good, of course, and the “apostle” Paul would indeed be absolutely *thrilled* with the way the Christian religion has evolved in this regard. **And yet**, as is so often the case, there is another side to this story – the side of Jesus Christ.

You see, while he almost certainly has nothing against it, Jesus did **NOT** want any of us to worship *him* or revere *him* or honor *him* at all (see [Mark 10:18](#), [John 5:41](#), [John 7:16](#), [John 8:50-54](#), [John 12:44](#) et al) ... No, Jesus quite clearly wanted us instead to attain entrance into *his Kingdom* of Heaven -- a Kingdom that he said exists in every moment of **this** lifetime (see [Luke 17:20-21](#)), and he wanted us to do so not verbally via worship or mentally via prayer, but rather **actively** -- by emulating his teachings on self-sacrifice; by walking his Way's path of selfless service; and by honoring his heavenly Father by having the guts to radically enliven his Gospel about Love -- **not** Paul's gospel about him.

Amen ... Let it be so for you & yours today.

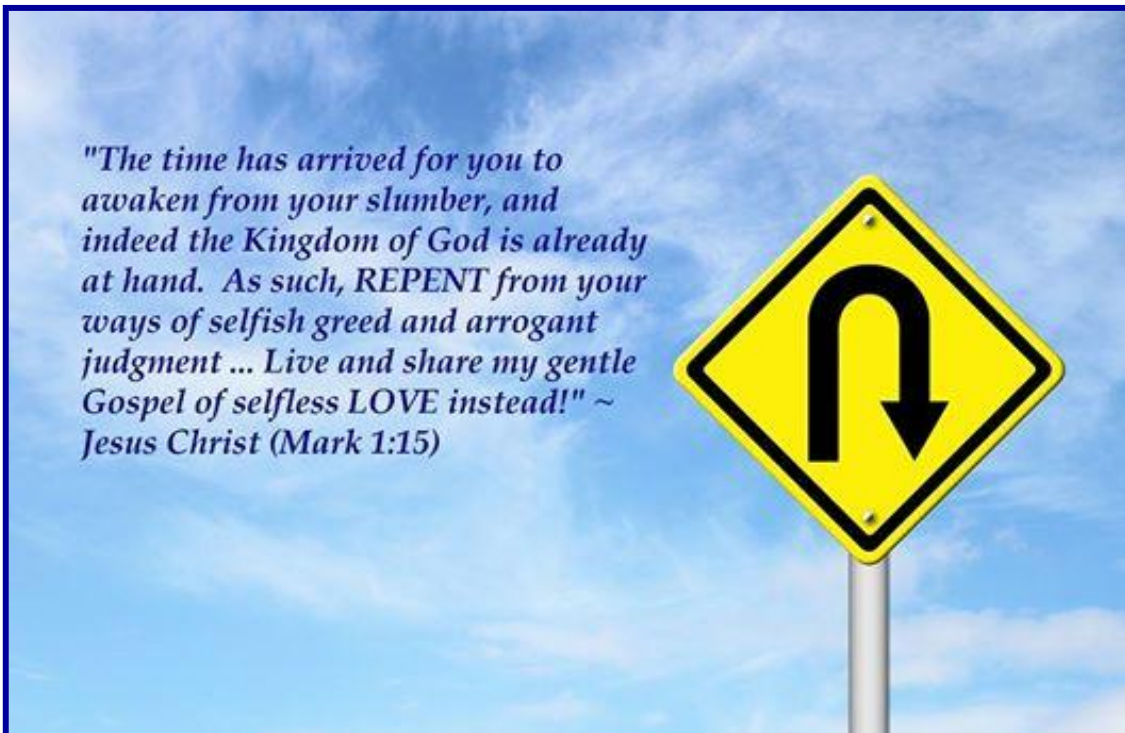


“As you go, proclaim **this** Good News: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is [already] at hand ... And because of the increase of lawlessness, the Love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures [in Love] to the end will be saved. And **this** Good News of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world ... and then the end will come.’” ~ **Jesus Christ** (Matthew 10:7 + Matthew 24:12-14)

P.S. As I have stated almost ad nauseum in other writings over the years, I lay no claim to have *the* answer -- not to the Bible, not to Jesus Christ, not to God, and certainly not to anything resembling post-mortem "salvation." Indeed, for me or anyone else (including any of YOU) to claim otherwise would be the epitome of arrogance -- something Jesus himself quite ironically and quite openly detested. (see [Matthew 18:3-4](#) & [Matthew 23:12](#))

So, that having been stated, allow me to repeat myself again and admit that traditional Christians *might* indeed be right; that Paul thus *might* indeed be right about Jesus (and that Jesus might therefore have been wrong about himself) ... And let me repeat again as well that *if* that is indeed the case, then we will *all* be dealing with a most unstable, a most immoral, & a most insecure God -- and therefore will *all* have a measure of unpleasant surprises awaiting us in the afterlife.

And so a return to what this post is **actually** about -- namely, what The Way of Jesus Christ is **actually** about -- namely, having the humility to set aside our arrogance & our selfishness long enough to self-sacrificially Care for others ... *That* is what Jesus preached throughout the Gospels, *that* is what I myself have tested and found to bear BY FAR the best Fruit, and *that* is indeed at the very least *a* way to enter the state of sheer Bliss that Jesus himself called "The Kingdom of Heaven." (again, see [Luke 17:20-21](#) -- the only time Jesus specifically speaks about Heaven in the entire Bible)



Luke 17:20-21 ... Heaven is not over there
(05/14/2016)



Ahhh, the richness of metaphor -- for to head towards a supposedly bejeweled “Paradise” in the somewhere Hereafter requires also heading with crystallized desire towards inevitable panic; when in Truth the only thing missing from this sign are the words:

“Kingdom of Heaven ... 0”

So now go forth and **MAKE IT SO!**

“The Kingdom of Heaven will not be coming in the future with happenings that can be observed, nor will they say 'Look, here it is!' or 'Look, there it is!' For in truth, the Kingdom of Heaven is already within you.”

~ Jesus Christ (Luke 17:20-21)



*You MUST Love your
enemies ...*



to BE BORN AGAIN

~ Matthew 5:39-48 + John 3:1-8

John 14:16-17 ... The Advocate Within
(07/24/2016)

Right Action (what some call “morality” or “Goodness”) is not about what your friends say or what you learned from your parents ... It's not about what you were taught in school or what your preacher told you from the pulpit ... It's not about being religiously devout or following acceptable social norms, and it sure as heck isn't about towing any particular political line.

No, my Friends, you don't need any of those often-false guides to allow your inner Divine Decency to blossom in full. For just as you already know that it is wrong to murder, and to rape, and to enslave, and to torture -- just as you already know that it is wrong to lie, and to cheat, and to manipulate, and to steal ... Just as you already know these things, so too do you know the opposite -- that Justice is *for all*; that Goodness reigns over selfishness; that Love always triumphs over anger & fear ... You don't need anyone to tell you these things -- and you certainly don't need to heed any pundits or politicians or preachers trying to tell you differently.

My dear, dear Friends, you already know that it is wrong to cause others unnecessary suffering; that it is wrong to make your pleasure more important than others' pain -- and you already know just as clearly that it is just as Right & just as Good & just as True to do exactly the opposite; to serve others even when tired -- to forgive those who offend -- to sacrifice for strangers -- to defend those who are being abused.

You already **KNOW** all these Truths, my Friends ... Indeed, you have understood them quite fully since your earliest years.

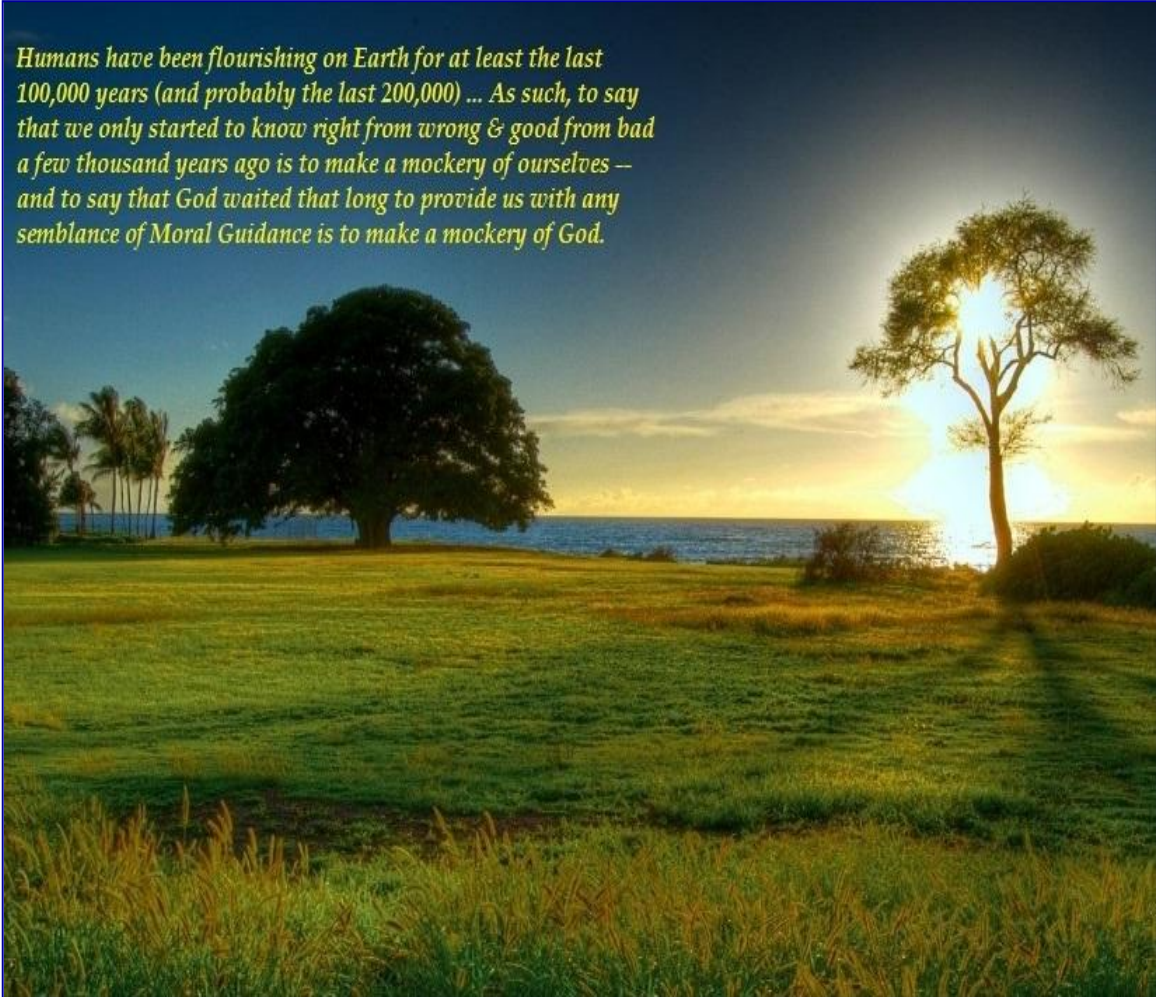
All that remains now is for you to have the courage to go forth ...
... and **BRING THEM TO LIFE!**

Amen ... Let it be so.

*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This Advocate is the Spirit of Truth -- an essence that the world cannot receive, because those of the world neither see it nor know it. And yet you already know it, because **it abides with you**, and it will be forever within you.”*

~ Jesus Christ (John 14:16-17)

Humans have been flourishing on Earth for at least the last 100,000 years (and probably the last 200,000) ... As such, to say that we only started to know right from wrong & good from bad a few thousand years ago is to make a mockery of ourselves – and to say that God waited that long to provide us with any semblance of Moral Guidance is to make a mockery of God.





*“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*