

# MESSIAH THEOLOGY

## VOLUME VI:

### DOES GOD LOVE UNCONDITIONALLY?



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## Chapter 1: The Bridegroom, the Bride, and the Betrothal!

What do Katy Perry, The Pretenders, R.E.O. Speedwagon, Randy Travis, Florida Georgia Line, the Backstreet Boys, Tammy Wynette, and many more secular musicians have in common with most Christian teachers these days? Well, they are all preaching a similar message; a message centered on the idea of “unconditional love”.<sup>1</sup>

Katy Perry sings: “There is no fear now; Let go and just be free; Cause I will love you, Unconditionally.”<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile Charles Stanley preaches: “God’s love is unconditional. Unlike earthly affection, His love doesn’t fluctuate. The Father doesn’t care for us more when we have pleased Him or less when we have failed or sinned.”<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, the Pretenders proclaim: “Nothing you confess; Could make me love you less; I’ll stand by you; Let me come along; ‘Cause even if you’re wrong; I’ll stand by you.”<sup>4</sup> And the popular Christian website Crosswalk.com teaches: “God never runs out of unconditional love. God’s love is infinite. There will never be a day when God doesn’t love you. You can’t do or say anything to revoke God’s love: that’s the gospel in a nutshell.”<sup>5</sup>

When we consider these messages carefully, we understand they are speaking of a love without boundaries; a love that cannot be won or lost. In fact, they describe a love without fear; a love that will never react to sin, iniquity, or injury.

Often those who sing the praises of “unconditional love” use the perspective of a parent’s love for their child. This is because a Biblical divorce can end the relationship between a husband and a wife<sup>6</sup>, but it cannot end the relationship between a parent and their child.

Therefore, before we analyze these popular proclamations of GOD’s “unconditional love”, we must carefully examine how Scripture describes the Christian’s relationship to GOD. Does Scripture describe the relationship in terms that speak of marriage, or does It describe the relationship in terms that speak of GOD as a parent and us as His children?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://spinditty.com/playlists/Pop-Rock-and-Country-Songs-About-Unconditional-Love>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.songlyrics.com/katy-perry/unconditionally-lyrics/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.intouch.org/read/bible-study-gods-unconditional-love>

<sup>4</sup> <https://genius.com/Pretenders-ill-stand-by-you-lyrics>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/important-things-to-know-about-unconditional-love.html>

<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 24:1, Jeremiah 3:8

At first glance it would seem obvious that the Apostolic Scriptures describe GOD as **“our Father”**. After all, JESUS told us to pray **“Our Father in heaven”**<sup>7</sup>!

But Paul also wrote: **“I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**<sup>8</sup>

So, what kind of relationship can harmonize Paul's words about Christians being **“betrothed”**<sup>9</sup> to JESUS with the many passages that portray GOD as a **“Father”**? Well, the answer is: the relationship a father-in-law has with his daughter-in-law!

GOD Himself commanded in Exodus: **“If [a father) has betrothed [a woman] to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.”**<sup>10</sup> So, when we are baptized into CHRIST, we enter into a **“betrothal”** covenant with JESUS to become His bride. But, at this point in time, the marriage has not yet happened!

For this reason, in Revelation 19, John recorded: **“I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.’”**<sup>11</sup>

And just 3 verses later, John wrote: **“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.”**<sup>12</sup>

Yes, when JESUS returns to establish His glorious eternal Kingdom, His saints will all be resurrected and gathered, to be married to Him forever! And just as Scripture describes the resurrection as a marriage to JESUS (the Son of GOD), it is simultaneously described as **“the adoption”** between us and GOD the Father!

Paul writes: **“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”**<sup>13</sup> And: **“Not only that, but we also who have the**

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<sup>7</sup> “Matthew 6:9

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2

<sup>9</sup> i.e., publicly and legally engaged to be married

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 21:9

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 19:6-8

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 19:11-12

<sup>13</sup> Romans 8:19

**firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”<sup>14</sup>**

Paul clearly uses present tense forms of the word **“wait”** in these important passages to indicate the sons of GOD have not yet experienced **“the revealing”**, just as we have not yet experienced **“the adoption”**. Then Paul pointed to the resurrection as the moment when the **“wait”** will be over for those two glorious events, by speaking of **“the redemption”** of our bodies.

About this moment that we are still waiting for, that Paul called **“the adoption”** and **“the revealing of the sons of GOD”**, John wrote: **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”<sup>15</sup>**

Truly, the Apostolic Scriptures are clear, we are currently **“betrothed”** to JESUS, but **“the marriage of the Lamb”** has not yet taken place. However, because the **“betrothal”** is a legal covenant with GOD, it makes GOD the Father our **“father-in-law”<sup>16</sup>** as long as we abide within the terms of the covenant.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, our relationship with GOD the HOLY SPIRIT is Biblically compared to how GOD’s glory dwelt in His earthly Tabernacle (and later the Temple). So, Paul wrote: **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”<sup>18</sup>**

You see, because our GOD is three in one, Father, Son and HOLY SPIRIT<sup>19</sup>, our relationship to GOD is pictured in three different ways! GOD the Father is currently our **“father-in-law”**, JESUS is our **“betrothed Bridegroom”**, and we are **“the temple of the HOLY SPIRIT”**. However, our permanent **“adoption”** into the family of GOD is not complete until **“the Bridegroom”** officially marries His bride at the resurrection!

In the meantime, JESUS has gone to **“prepare a place”** for His bride in the Kingdom of GOD. So, JESUS told His Disciples: **“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”<sup>20</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:23

<sup>15</sup> 1 John 3:2

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 21:9

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>20</sup> John 14:2-3

Brothers and Sisters, this is most certainly the language of betrothal! A bride and a bridegroom would publicly enter into a binding legal covenant to be married. Then the bridegroom would go to prepare a place for the couple to live, often within his father's house (especially if his father was a king). Then, until the day of the marriage, they would live under separate roofs, within their respective father's households.

The bridegroom's father became the bride's father-in-law from the time the betrothal began. And the only way that the bride's relationship with both her bridegroom or her father-in-law could end is if the bride or the bridegroom violated the terms of their betrothal covenant. Such a violation would lead to the end of their betrothal. In fact: the purpose of the betrothal period was to verify the faithfulness of the bride and the bridegroom.

Truly, we see this exact pattern in the betrothal of Mary and Joseph. Matthew writes: **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.**<sup>21</sup>

Because these events took place “**before they came together**”, they were not yet living under the same roof. So, until an angel told Joseph to proceed with his marriage to Mary, he could have “**put her away**” if she had been unfaithful. Also, Joseph would have been able to put Mary away “**secretly**”, because Mary was not yet living inside his house.

And we can be sure, only this Biblical “**betrothal**” perspective actually harmonizes all that the Scriptures have to say about our current relationship with GOD! JESUS our bridegroom is preparing a place for us in His Father's house, and we are waiting for His return.

Friends, this was the exact perspective JESUS was conveying when He said: “**The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.**”<sup>22</sup>

**And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the**

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 1:18-19

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 25:1-5

wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'<sup>23</sup>

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."<sup>24</sup>

The **virgins**<sup>25</sup> represent the saints JESUS has called out of the world to Himself. The "**wise virgins**" were "**ready**" for the bridegroom's return but the "**foolish virgins**" were not. And the symbolic "**oil**" that kept the "**lamps**" of the "**wise virgins**" burning brightly was described by JESUS and His Disciples in several other places in Scripture.

JESUS spoke very clearly about "**good works**" in the context of a burning "**lamp**" when He said: "**You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**"<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Paul spoke about Christians being "**light**", by writing: **But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.**<sup>27</sup>

In Scripture, darkness is often used as a metaphor for sin, while light is often used as a metaphor for righteousness. So, while speaking of sin's darkness, Paul called those who practice sin: "**sons of disobedience**"; and he warned they will face the wrath of GOD.

Meanwhile, Paul encouraged the saints in Ephesus to "**walk as children of light**", "**finding out what is acceptable to the LORD**". Clearly Paul's admonition proves

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 25:6-9

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 25:1-13

<sup>25</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 5:3-10

there are certain things that are *unacceptable* to the LORD, and Paul lists many of those things in this passage!

So, we can see: Paul was describing what the light-bringing lamp oil of Matthew 25 represents, when he recounted how He declared to everyone he met: **“they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”**<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, JESUS was describing what the light-bringing lamp oil of Matthew 25 represents when, before accepting or rejecting each of the seven churches the book of Revelation was written to, He said to each of them: **“I know your works”**<sup>29</sup>.

Yes, every foolish virgin who does not keep herself ready for the bridegroom’s return should note that JESUS said to the church of Thyatira: **“I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.”**<sup>30</sup>

Likewise, every foolish virgin should note that JESUS said to the church of Laodicea: **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”**<sup>31</sup> These are the types of words the foolish virgins should prepare to hear from the lips of the one they call “LORD, LORD!”.

Both Proverbs and the Apostle Peter have warned us all by asking: **“Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”**<sup>32</sup>

But the wise virgins will hear: **“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”**<sup>33</sup>

Just as the bridegroom will say: **“I do not know you”**<sup>34</sup> to the unprepared foolish virgins who cry out **“LORD, LORD!”**; JESUS warned many who say **“LORD, LORD!”**

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<sup>28</sup> Acts 26:20

<sup>29</sup> Revelation 2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, & 3:15

<sup>30</sup> Revelation 2:20-23

<sup>31</sup> Revelation 3:15-16

<sup>32</sup> 1 Peter 4:18, Proverbs 11:31 LXX

<sup>33</sup> Revelation 3:8

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 25:11-12



will hear Him say: **“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”**<sup>35</sup>

According to the LORD's own teachings: The light-bringing lamp oil most certainly represents **“works”** or **“fruits”** **“worthy of repentance”**<sup>36</sup>, and the lack of light-bringing lamp oil represents **“practicing lawlessness”**.

And now that we understand the parable of the foolish and wise virgins, we need to consider another teaching JESUS presented that is very similar. But this one includes the perspective of GOD the Father.

JESUS said: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.”**<sup>37</sup>

**“And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’”**<sup>38</sup>

**“So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”**<sup>39</sup>

Obviously, the king represents GOD the Father, and the king's son represents JESUS. The wedding represents the marriage of JESUS to His Church at the end of the age; and the invitations represent the message of the Gospel.

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew 7:23

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 3:8-10

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 22:2-5

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 22:6-9

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 22:2-14

Some of the people who were invited did not properly value the invitation, so they were distracted by the cares, riches, and pleasures of life<sup>40</sup>.

Other wicked people turned against GOD's prophets who announced the Father's invitation to the wedding feast, and killed the servants of GOD<sup>41</sup>. So, GOD judged those wicked people and sent armies to destroy them; such as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans.<sup>42</sup>

Then this led the LORD to send His messengers out to the Gentiles to invite the entire world to the marriage of the Lamb<sup>43</sup>. And because of this, the marriage feast was full of people<sup>44</sup>.

But some of the people were not worthy to be at the wedding, and JESUS described their unreadiness by recounting the king saying: **“Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?”** And this passage leads us back to the book of Revelation.

There John wrote that he heard the voice of a great multitude saying: **“Let us be glad and rejoice and give [GOD] glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”**<sup>45</sup>

Once again, we see another passage pointing to **“righteous acts”** or works being a requirement for the bride of CHRIST! So, the person who was not wearing an appropriate wedding garment in Matthew 22 neglected to **“repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”**<sup>46</sup>

Brothers and Sisters, this is why JESUS plainly warned: **“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”**<sup>47</sup>

The MESSIAH's message is very easy to understand; we will all be judged by our works! So, JESUS said: **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done**

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<sup>40</sup> “Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” Luke 8:14

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 23:37-39

<sup>42</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

<sup>43</sup> Acts 13:46

<sup>44</sup> Revelation 7:9-10

<sup>45</sup> Revelation 19:7-8

<sup>46</sup> Acts 26:20b

<sup>47</sup> Matthew 7:19-21

**good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”<sup>48</sup>**

Our LORD made many crystal-clear statements regarding how He will judge us all in the end! But over the centuries people have avoided these verses because they didn't understand how they fit together with the cross of JESUS, and Him laying down His life for our sins.

This confusion flows out of a lack of respect for the First 39 Books of the Bible, as well as many misunderstandings surrounding the letters of Paul. But once we actually listen to Paul, who taught us that **“All Scripture”** **“is profitable”<sup>49</sup>**, and we see how Paul treated every book of the Bible as the authoritative, eternal Word of GOD<sup>50</sup>, we realize we can only understand the New Covenant in CHRIST when we first understand the Old Covenant given to Moses.

The epistle to the Hebrews has been given to us to reveal the correct understanding of where the two covenants agree and where they differ. And the simplest way to summarize the message of Hebrews is to say: The system GOD established for atoning for sin changed, but His Commandments did not!

According to Hebrews, JESUS replaced the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, and the methods of fleshly purification given to Moses in the First Covenant. But Scripture is equally clear, JESUS reaffirmed and raised the bar on the Laws and Commandments of GOD that have nothing to do with the Levitical system of cleansing.

This is why James wrote to the churches: **“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery’, also said, ‘Do not murder’. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.”<sup>51</sup>**

Likewise, Paul wrote: **“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”<sup>52</sup>**

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<sup>48</sup> John 5:28-29

<sup>49</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15-17

<sup>50</sup> Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Romans 7:12

<sup>51</sup> James 2:8-12

<sup>52</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

While we must never diminish what JESUS has done for us, the fact is: If the cross of CHRIST was the *only* item in the Bible that the world needed to be saved, JESUS would have never taught: **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”**<sup>53</sup>

JESUS did not die on the cross so we could ignore His Commandments and continue sinning! No, He died to demonstrate His love to the world, and provide the one and only sacrifice that could really take away the sins of those who repent and put their faith in Him!<sup>54</sup>

Or, as Paul put it: **“Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”**<sup>55</sup>

No other sacrifice could take away our sins. No good deed can wash away our iniquity. But, just as the sacrifices were only *one* part of the Levitical Covenant, the cross is only *one* part of the New Covenant in CHRIST JESUS our LORD!

The “Ark of the Covenant” contained the words of the Covenant that are most commonly known as “the Ten Commandments”. So Exodus records: **“Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”**<sup>56</sup>

But GOD knew the people could not keep His Commandments perfectly, without ever stumbling.<sup>57</sup> So, He also gave them the Levitical Priesthood to temporarily cleanse them of their sins until JESUS came to permanently cleanse them.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Matthew 5:27-30

<sup>54</sup> Hebrews 10:4, Acts 13:38-39

<sup>55</sup> Titus 2:13b-14

<sup>56</sup> Exodus 34:28

<sup>57</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>58</sup> Leviticus 17:11

However, the cross was never meant to set aside the Commandments of the Covenant!<sup>59</sup> No, instead the cross reformed the priesthood, the way sin was atoned for, and the way GOD's people are sanctified!<sup>60</sup>

And this is evident when we read the promise of the New Covenant first given in Jeremiah, but later repeated in the epistle to the Hebrews. There GOD said: **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah– not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”**<sup>61</sup>

The New Covenant that JESUS inaugurated with His own blood has the same Commandments we first see presented in the Mosaic Covenant! But instead of those Commandments being written on tablets of stone in an inaccessible ark, now they are written on the hearts and minds of GOD's people!

The Commandments have not changed, only the priesthood and the sacrifices were replaced. And just as the people had to turn to the blood of bulls and goats to take away their sins in the First Covenant, we must turn to the blood of JESUS to take away sins in the New Covenant.

So, to every Christian who stumbles in their walk with JESUS, John wrote: **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”**<sup>62</sup>

GOD knows we are not yet perfected! So, JESUS made a way of grace for us to be forgiven when we stumble. But the MESSIAH's cross was never intended to make a way for sin to continue! No, the purpose of the cross is to make a way for us to learn how to stop sinning in the power of the Holy SPIRIT!

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<sup>59</sup> 1 John 2:3-4

<sup>60</sup> Hebrews 9:10, Hebrews 10:19-22

<sup>61</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33 & Hebrews 8:8-10

<sup>62</sup> 1 John 1:9-10

Therefore, JESUS instructed multiple people to **“sin no more”**<sup>63</sup>; and Paul rhetorically asked all of the saints in Rome: **“How shall we who died to sin continue any longer in it?”**<sup>64</sup>

Truly, these verses and many others just like them lead us to the purpose of the betrothal period and the definition of the word **“sanctification”**. The word **“sanctification”** means **“to be set apart as holy and pure”**.<sup>65</sup>

In the first covenant **“sanctification”** was achieved through **“foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed”**<sup>66</sup> as part of the Levitical system that was in place until JESUS came.

And those Levitical methods of sanctification are the **“works of the law”** Paul often wrote about negatively<sup>67</sup>. He wanted Christians to stop trusting in things like foods, ritual washings, genealogies, or circumcision to make them holy and set apart<sup>68</sup>. Instead, Paul taught Christians should set themselves apart by separating themselves from sin and the sinners who refuse to repent.<sup>69</sup>

So, Paul wrote: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”**<sup>70</sup>

To become children of GOD we must **“come out from”** and **“be separate”** from: **“unbelievers”**, **“lawlessness”**, **“darkness”**, and **“idolatry”**. But if we ignore this invitation to **“sanctification”**, GOD will not receive us as sons and daughters! Instead, we will be like the foolish virgins or the under-dressed wedding guest.

And JESUS presented this same message by saying: **“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find**

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<sup>63</sup> John 5:14, John 8:11

<sup>64</sup> Romans 6:1-2, Romans 8:3-4

<sup>65</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

<sup>66</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>67</sup> Romans 9:32, Galatians 2:11-16

<sup>68</sup> Philippians 3:3-7

<sup>69</sup> Ephesians 5:11-12

<sup>70</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

**so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**<sup>71</sup>

Like the wise virgins, the wise servant of JESUS will be living in obedience to His Word when He comes! But the foolish servant will ignore the Word of the LORD, they will mistreat their fellow believers, and they will eat and drink with the drunkards.

Yes, foolish servants ignore Paul's command that states: **I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.**<sup>72</sup> But wise servants heed this commandment.

And the reason these verses are related to the betrothal process is: a betrothal covenant meant the bridegroom and the bride were to be completely set apart for each other for a period of testing.

Before their entire community, they would both demonstrate their faithful love for their covenant partner by making every choice with their spouse in mind.

And we see this type of thinking in our LORD, when He prayed to the Father: **"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."**<sup>73</sup>

JESUS humbled Himself and laid down His life for His bride<sup>74</sup>; and all who understand the glorious future that belongs to the Bride of CHRIST will lay down their lives for the Bridegroom!

JESUS must come first in all things! The angels are watching! The saints in heaven are watching! The HOLY SPIRIT is watching! JESUS is watching! And most importantly, the Father is watching! The Father of the Bridegroom will not allow anyone into the wedding feast who has not demonstrated that they love His Son with all their heart<sup>75</sup>!

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<sup>71</sup> Matthew 24:45-51

<sup>72</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:11

<sup>73</sup> John 17:16-19

<sup>74</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27

<sup>75</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:22

So, the truth is: the betrothal period is a period of testing!<sup>76</sup> Therefore, just as Joseph, a righteous and just man would have been right to put away Mary if she had been unfaithful; GOD will righteously reject all who fail to demonstrate that they will be faithful to His Son!<sup>77</sup>

As JESUS said: **“Many are called, but few are chosen”!**<sup>78</sup> Let us be wise virgins with our lamps burning brightly, dressed in the **“righteous acts”** we saints are commanded to perform in GOD’s strength! JESUS is worth it, Brothers and Sisters! And the **“betrothal”** perspective that Scripture teaches must be remembered when we test the popular principle of “unconditional love”.

After all, in context Paul wrote: **For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**<sup>79</sup>

Clearly Paul thought saints could fall through deception just as Eve fell! And this passage should be included in our understanding of our current relationship to GOD, if we look to **all of the Bible and the Bible alone!**

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<sup>76</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Psalms 11:4-5

<sup>77</sup> Matthew 10:37-38, Luke 20:35, Revelation 3:4

<sup>78</sup> Matthew 20:16, Matthew 22:14, Revelation 17:14, Ephesians 4:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:11

<sup>79</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2-3



## Chapter 2: Faith, Fathers, and The Flesh

What do Nancy Pelosi<sup>80</sup>, Barak Obama<sup>81</sup>, Joe Biden<sup>82</sup>, Tulsi Gabbard<sup>83</sup>, Alan Jackson<sup>84</sup>, Justin Bieber<sup>85</sup>, Dolly Parton<sup>86</sup>, Mitt Romney<sup>87</sup>, Harry Connick Jr.<sup>88</sup>, Judah Smith<sup>89</sup>, and Pope Francis<sup>90</sup> all have in common? Well, each of them preaches the message: "We are all GOD's children".

In a song with that popular claim as its title, Alan Jackson sings: "Here comes a Baptist, here comes a Jew, there goes a Mormon and a Muslim too, I see a Buddhist and a Hindu, I see a Catholic and I see you." Then he repeats: "We're all God's children" three times before asking: "Why can't we be one big happy family?"<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, the Pope proclaimed to an audience of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and a tiny minority of Catholics: "We are living at a time when religious believers and people of goodwill everywhere sense the need to grow in mutual understanding and respect and to support each other as members of our one human family, for all of us are God's children."<sup>92</sup>

Are these popular politicians, leaders, and singers, correct? Does the Bible ever teach that, regardless of a person's beliefs, values, or behavior, all people everywhere are actually GOD's children?

If the Bible does teach that all people are GOD's children, this would lay a relatively unshakable foundation for the teaching that GOD's love is

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<sup>80</sup> <https://www.cnsnews.com/blog/cnsnewscom-staff/pelosi-faith-tells-us-were-all-gods-children-were-made-image-and-likeness-god>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/obama-condemns-anti-muslim-rhetoric-in-first-visit-to-us-mosque-we-are-all-gods-children/78587.htm>

<sup>82</sup> <https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/we-re-all-god-s-children-president-biden-signs-executive-order-on-racial-equality>

<sup>83</sup> <https://iheartintelligence.com/gabbard-calls-on-people-to-reject-racialism-were-all-gods-children-race-politics-is-divisive/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/1285205/Alan+Jackson/We%27re+All+God%27s+Children>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/black-lives-matter-gods-children-equal-says-bieber/>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/dolly-parton-black-lives-matter-blm-b1767224.html>

<sup>87</sup> <https://christiannews.net/2012/10/04/mitt-romney-were-all-children-of-the-same-god/>

<sup>88</sup> <https://hellochristian.com/6528-harry-connick-jr-were-all-americans-we-are-all-gods-children>

<sup>89</sup> <https://twitter.com/judahsmith/status/1186364145911947265>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-chronicles/all-us-are-gods-children-pope-says-video-message-myanmar>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/1285205/Alan+Jackson/We%27re+All+God%27s+Children>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-chronicles/all-us-are-gods-children-pope-says-video-message-myanmar>

unconditional! After all, what would people think of a father who loved only some of His children?

In fact, most teachers who proclaim that GOD's love is "unconditional" eventually rely on people assuming that GOD is their father. But is that assumption true? Well, to begin to answer this question (and to continue answering our primary question that asks "Does GOD love unconditionally") we should start in the gospel of John.

There, the Apostle John recorded JESUS saying: **"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."**<sup>93</sup>

JESUS created a conditional statement by using the Greek equivalent of the English word "if"<sup>94</sup>. And this conditional statement hinges 'being a child of GOD' on whether or not a person 'loves JESUS'. If someone truly loves JESUS, they prove that GOD is their Father. If they don't love JESUS, they prove GOD is not their father.

And this verse obviously reinforces the "betrothal perspective" we learned about previously. If a person loves JESUS, they will enter into a betrothal covenant with Him, they will be faithful to Him, and they will become GOD's children in the same sense that a "son-in-law" or "daughter-in-law" becomes the child of the parents of their spouse.

However, the people JESUS spoke to that day did not love Him. Therefore, since JESUS declared: all who are truly GOD's children would love Him, these people could not be considered the children of GOD.

Confirming this conclusion, the Apostle John wrote about JESUS: **"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."**<sup>95</sup>

The word translated "**receive**" in this passage is: "**par-al-am-ban'-o**": and it means: **"to accept or acknowledge one to be such as he professes to be, not to reject, and not to withhold obedience"**<sup>96</sup>

Now, with this word accurately defined, we should note that Scripture is clear: only JESUS can give people **"the right to become children of GOD"**! Therefore, this passage teaches us a few key facts.

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<sup>93</sup> John 8:42

<sup>94</sup> Strongs Number G1487: εἰ - if, whether (a primary particle of conditionality)

<sup>95</sup> John 1:11-12

<sup>96</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon definition under Strong's Number G3880

First: the passage affirms the “betrothal perspective” because the only way a person can obtain the right to join the family of GOD is to enter a betrothal covenant with JESUS, GOD’s **“only begotten Son”**<sup>97</sup>!

You see, the Greek adjective that is commonly translated **“only begotten”** is: **“mon-og-en-ace”**, and it describes an **“only child”** or **“a child with no natural siblings”**.

And the only way to become a child of GOD the Father is by faithfully loving His **“only begotten”** Son, who laid down His life for His bride!

Second, not every person is a child of GOD, since each person must **“receive”** JESUS to **“become”** GOD’s child, but not everyone has **“received”** JESUS.

Meanwhile, GOD Himself testified (at least three times, to many witnesses) that JESUS is His **“beloved Son”**<sup>98</sup>. So, JESUS explained: **“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”**<sup>99</sup>

Third: if someone does not come to GOD by **“receiving”** JESUS, they do not have **“the right”** to be a child of GOD.

Therefore, JESUS said: **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**<sup>100</sup>

And fourth: **“receiving”** JESUS and **“believing”** all the Bible teaches about Him is a requirement to **“becoming”** a child of GOD. So, those who don’t believe in the *Biblical* JESUS proclaimed in the 66 books of the Bible cannot be the children of GOD!

About this fact, the Apostle John wrote: **Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.**<sup>101</sup>

The Greek word John used (that is typically translated **“doctrine”**) was: **“did-akh-ay”**. And this word comes from the Greek word **“did-as'-ko”** that means **“to teach”**.

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<sup>97</sup> John 1:14

<sup>98</sup> Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, 2 Peter 1:17-18

<sup>99</sup> John 6:45

<sup>100</sup> John 14:6

<sup>101</sup> 2 John 1:9

So, the phrase **“the doctrine of CHRIST”** means two things. First it means: everything JESUS taught. And second, it means: all the things Scripture teaches us about JESUS.

For example, the Bible teaches us that JESUS came **“in the flesh”**<sup>102</sup>. And this phrase means: JESUS was born into a real, human body, just like the type of body we have.<sup>103</sup>

So, in the same letter where John explained we all must **“abide in the doctrine of CHRIST”** to have fellowship with **“the Father and the Son”**, John wrote: **By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**<sup>104</sup>

Also, in the letter we call 2<sup>nd</sup> John, the Apostle cautioned: **For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.**<sup>105</sup>

You see, John explained: denying that JESUS was born into a fleshly body made someone **“a deceiver and an antichrist”**! Or, in other words, because people such as the “Gnostics”<sup>106</sup> denied the plain facts the Bible recorded about JESUS, they did not **“have”** JESUS or the Father!

Likewise, John wrote: **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**<sup>107</sup>

So, if a person were to deny that JESUS was the CHRIST, the MESSIAH of Biblical prophecy, they would also be an antichrist and a deceiver. Scripture plainly records JESUS replying to the Samaritan woman who was speaking to Him about the MESSIAH: **“I who speak to you am He”**.<sup>108</sup>

Additionally, all who deny that JESUS is the MESSIAH<sup>109</sup> fail to recognize that CHRIST is not the last name of JESUS! No, **“CHRIST”** is the common English pronunciation of the Greek word **“khris-tos”** that means **“MESSIAH”**<sup>110</sup>! And

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<sup>102</sup> 1 John 4:2, Romans 1:3, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 2:14

<sup>103</sup> Philippians 2:5-8, Galatians 4:4

<sup>104</sup> 1 John 4:2-3

<sup>105</sup> 2 John 1:7

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gnosticism>

<sup>107</sup> 1 John 2:22-23

<sup>108</sup> John 4:25-26

<sup>109</sup> <https://youtu.be/5KaDX6yJk4>

<sup>110</sup> John 1:41

**“MESSIAH”** is the common English pronunciation of the Hebrew word **“maw-shee'-akh”** that means **“anointed one”**<sup>111</sup>

The fact is: the name **“JESUS”** and the title **“CHRIST”** are associated together in at least 259 places in the Apostolic Scriptures. So, to deny that JESUS is the MESSIAH is to deny the abundantly clear testimony of GOD's Word!

Such denials indicate a person has not remained **“in the doctrine of CHRIST”**, they do not have fellowship with JESUS or the Father, and they are **“a deceiver”** and **“an antichrist”** according to Scripture!

But John also tells us how to determine if someone has *really* **“received”** JESUS and **“believed”** in Him to successfully become a child of GOD. He Wrote: **“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”**<sup>112</sup>

Many people *claim* they believe in JESUS and state they have **“received”** Him as their Savior, but John makes it clear in this passage that they are still **“children of the devil”** if they don't **“practice righteousness”**!

In fact, John also wrote: **“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”**<sup>113</sup>

The term **“sinner”** is how the Bible describes any person who practices disobedience to GOD's commandments<sup>114</sup>. And the Bible is very clear that sinners are **“of the devil”**. Now, in plain English, this phrase means: the devil is the father of all who practice sin!

Meanwhile, those who repent of their sins and call on JESUS for forgiveness are completely cleansed of their sins, filled with the SPIRIT, and empowered to live in righteousness as children of GOD<sup>115</sup> betrothed to His Son<sup>116</sup>.

So, Paul explained: **Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of**

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<sup>111</sup> John 4:25

<sup>112</sup> 1 John 3:10

<sup>113</sup> 1 John 3:7-8

<sup>114</sup> James 5:19-20, 1 Peter 4:18, Romans 5:8

<sup>115</sup> Romans 6:18

<sup>116</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27

**doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**<sup>117</sup>

Satan holds every sinner captive in the lusts of their flesh and the condemnation their disobedience to GOD's commandments deserves<sup>118</sup>. But JESUS sets repentant sinners free from sin's slavery and condemnation through His mighty cross! And once we have been set free from our former bondage to sin through the blood of JESUS, our lives should be marked by a resolute commitment to live in obedience to GOD!

This is why, in John chapter 8, JESUS said to some Jews who claimed that Abraham was their father: **"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."**<sup>119</sup>

Technically, the people JESUS spoke to that day were descendants of Abraham **"according to the flesh"**<sup>120</sup>; but human ancestry does not matter at all to GOD when it comes to salvation through JESUS CHRIST!<sup>121</sup> Instead, our *spiritual* lineage is what matters to our Creator; and the identity of our spiritual father is made evident by our actions!

So, while those Jews were not "genetically" children of the devil, they were "spiritually" children of the devil. Likewise, even though they were "genetically" children of Abraham, they were not Abraham's "spiritual" descendants!

About this, Paul explained: **"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations<sup>122</sup> by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations<sup>123</sup> shall be blessed.'** So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."<sup>124</sup>

Even **"the nations"** that have no genetic connection whatsoever to Abraham can partake in the blessings Abraham received from GOD. In fact, we all

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<sup>117</sup> Romans 6:16-18

<sup>118</sup> Romans 6:16-18, Hebrews 2:14-15

<sup>119</sup> John 8:44

<sup>120</sup> John 8:15a, Acts 2:30, Romans 1:3, 4:1, 8:1, 8:4-5, 8:12-14, 9:3-5, 1 Corinthians 1:26, 2 Corinthians 1:17, 5:16-17, 10:2-3, 11:18, Galatians 4:22-31, Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22, and Hebrews 7:14-16

<sup>121</sup> Ezekiel 18:1-28, John 6:63

<sup>122</sup> Although many translations place the word "Gentiles" here, literally the same Greek word is used in this passage twice: eth'-nos (Strong's Number G1484)

<sup>123</sup> Although many translations place the word "nations" here, literally the same Greek word is used in this passage twice: eth'-nos (Strong's Number G1484)

<sup>124</sup> Galatians 3:7-9

become spiritual **“sons of Abraham”** when we choose to live according to the faith of Abraham!

Therefore, in Romans, Paul wrote about Abraham: **he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be accounted<sup>125</sup> to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.**<sup>126</sup>

Then Paul concluded: **Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.**<sup>127</sup>

In Romans chapter 4, Paul confirmed: all who **“walk in the steps of the faith”** of Abraham become the children of Abraham. And JESUS was the first to teach this principle!

When the Jews of John chapter 8 said to JESUS: **“Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.”**<sup>128</sup>

You see, JESUS, Paul, John, and the rest of the Apostles and Disciples of our LORD taught: becoming a child of GOD requires a person to believe GOD’s Word and obey it. Likewise, they taught: becoming a child of Abraham requires a person to believe GOD’s Word and obey it. This is why JESUS said: **“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”**<sup>129</sup>

Yes, just as all people are not **“children of GOD”** simply because GOD created Adam<sup>130</sup>; people are not children of Abraham just because they physically descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Instead, people can only be the children of Abraham if they **“walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham”** and **“do the works”** that Abraham did!

This caused Paul to write: **“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one**

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<sup>125</sup> Strong's Number G3049: log-id'-zom-ahee - to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over, to take into account, to make an account of...

<sup>126</sup> Romans 4:11-12

<sup>127</sup> Romans 4:16

<sup>128</sup> John 8:39

<sup>129</sup> Luke 8:21

<sup>130</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:44b-49

**inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”<sup>131</sup>**

Likewise, Paul explained: **They are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”<sup>132</sup>**

In several places Scripture teaches that the circumstances surrounding the lives of Ishmael and Isaac (the two sons of Abraham) can help us understand the passages we have been reading.

Paul labels Abraham’s firstborn son Ishmael: **“he who was born according to the flesh”<sup>133</sup>**. Then, in the same passage, he calls Isaac: **“he who was born according to the SPIRIT”**.

Ishmael was Sarah and Abraham’s fleshly attempt to fulfill the promise of GOD through Sarah’s handmaiden Hagar. However, even though Ishmael was Abraham’s firstborn son, GOD did not give the promised inheritance to him.

Instead, the promised covenant blessings went to Isaac and his descendants! And this fact demonstrates that the gifts of GOD cannot be inherited by fleshly means. Instead, GOD’s blessings must be inherited by faith in GOD’s Word and faith in GOD’s Son; faith that actually leads to obedience.

So, when leaders, politicians, and singers claim “we are all GOD’s children” just because GOD created Adam, the fleshly father of the human race; they are gravely mistaken. And this error flows out of the same fleshly thinking that would label Ishmael the rightful heir to Abraham’s blessings!

Meanwhile, Scripture records about Ishmael: **“Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”<sup>134</sup>** And if the phrase “cast out” reminds you of another passage of Scripture, you are probably thinking of Genesis chapter 3.

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<sup>131</sup> Romans 2:28-29

<sup>132</sup> Romans 9:6b-9

<sup>133</sup> Galatians 4:28-31

<sup>134</sup> Galatians 4:30 (See also: Genesis 21:12 where GOD agrees with Sarah)



There, GOD “**cast**” Adam and Eve “**out**”<sup>135</sup> of the garden because they disobeyed the Word of the LORD and sinned<sup>136</sup>. And just as Hagar was a “**bondwoman**”, Adam and Eve enslaved themselves and all of creation into what Paul called: the “**bondage of corruption**”<sup>137</sup>.

About this bondage, JESUS proclaimed: “**Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.**”<sup>138</sup> And His Apostles echoed this fact.<sup>139</sup> So, Adam and Eve fell into slavery and condemnation the day they chose to sin against GOD.

But Paul compared Adam to JESUS, writing: **Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.**<sup>140</sup>

And in another letter, Paul compared Adam to JESUS again, by recording: **It is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.**<sup>141</sup>

This is why we can only become the children of GOD through JESUS, GOD’s Son!<sup>142</sup> Adam fell from his position and plunged all of humanity into deception, condemnation, and separation from GOD. But JESUS came to reverse the fall, and bring us back to GOD through the blood of His cross!

Yes, just as every fleshly descendant of Abraham cannot be considered a child of Abraham; every fleshly descendant of Adam cannot be considered a child of GOD! This is because Adam’s disobedience brought sin, judgment, death,

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<sup>135</sup> Same Greek word used in the LXX in Genesis 3:24 and Genesis 21:10 (G1544 ek-bal'-lo: to cast out, drive out, to send out)

<sup>136</sup> Genesis 3:24

<sup>137</sup> Romans 8:21

<sup>138</sup> John 8:34

<sup>139</sup> Romans 6:16

<sup>140</sup> Romans 5:18-19

<sup>141</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

<sup>142</sup> Galatians 3:26-29

and decay into GOD's perfect world. Plus, sin always gives the devil power over the sinner<sup>143</sup>.

But JESUS came to break the chains of sin, so we could be set free from satan's darkness! And when we come to JESUS in faith and repentance to **“walk as children of light”**<sup>144</sup>, He transfers us out of satan's kingdom of darkness into GOD's glorious kingdom of light!<sup>145</sup>

Therefore, just as GOD made a promise to Abraham that he would inherit many blessings; GOD has issued a promise to all who will repent and believe on JESUS His Son! And the Apostle Paul recorded this wonderful promise in his second letter to the saints in Corinth.

He wrote to them: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**<sup>146</sup>

Just as Abraham was called by GOD to leave behind many temporal things to obtain an eternal inheritance<sup>147</sup>, so are we! Thus, if we are to become Abraham's sons and daughters we must **“do the works of Abraham”**<sup>148</sup>.

And this means: we must commit to faithfully following JESUS our LORD, we must choose to obey GOD in all things, we must **“come out”** from among the sinners of this world, and we must turn our backs on the immorality, idolatry, and covetousness that is so rampant all around us<sup>149</sup>.

Yes, we must separate ourselves from the corruption and lawlessness the unbelievers embrace<sup>150</sup>. Only then can we truly be the children of Abraham. Plus,

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<sup>143</sup> John 14:30, John 16:11, Acts 26:18, Hebrews 2:14-15

<sup>144</sup> Ephesians 5:1-8

<sup>145</sup> Acts 26:18

<sup>146</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

<sup>147</sup> Genesis 12:1-4

<sup>148</sup> John 8:39

<sup>149</sup> 1 Peter 3:10-12

<sup>150</sup> Jude 1:22-23

only after we choose to be set apart as the Bride of CHRIST, can we say that we are the sons and daughters of Almighty GOD!<sup>151</sup>

As a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth<sup>152</sup>, Abraham was led by GOD away from his country, his family, and his father's house to a "promised" land he had never laid eyes on before.<sup>153</sup> Likewise, we are called to come out from the world, to think like Abraham thought<sup>154</sup>, to be separate, and to look for an eternal promised land where righteousness dwells.<sup>155</sup>

If Abraham would have esteemed his fleshly family more important than faithfully obeying the calling of GOD<sup>156</sup>, he would have never been blessed by GOD with a son or the innumerable descendants he inherited<sup>157</sup>. But Abraham became an example to us all of walking "**by faith, not by sight**"<sup>158</sup>. He considered GOD's Word to be more reliable than his own fleshly perception of the world, and he obeyed the words of His Creator above all other voices<sup>159</sup>.

So, just like Abraham, we must walk after the SPIRIT, not after the flesh<sup>160</sup>! Yes, Paul explained: **Brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**<sup>161</sup>

Just as Abraham was led by the SPIRIT of GOD instead of his fleshly understanding of the world, we must be led by the SPIRIT of GOD to be His sons and daughters! And the SPIRIT will empower us to "**put to death**" the sinful "**deeds of the body**" that used to hold us captive, so the devil will have no more corrupting influence in our lives!

For this reason Peter admonished all GOD's true children to "**be holy**", by writing: **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is**

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<sup>151</sup> Ephesians 5:8-12

<sup>152</sup> Hebrews 11:13

<sup>153</sup> Genesis 12:1-4

<sup>154</sup> Hebrews 11:13

<sup>155</sup> Hebrews 11:13-16, 2 Peter 3:13-14

<sup>156</sup> Matthew 10:34-39

<sup>157</sup> Genesis 15:4-6

<sup>158</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:7

<sup>159</sup> Genesis 22:15-18

<sup>160</sup> Romans 8:4

<sup>161</sup> Romans 8:12-14

written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.<sup>162</sup>

Did you notice how this translation records Peter using the phrase: “**as obedient children**”? Well, because Peter actually used two Greek nouns in that phrase but no Greek adjectives, the English adjective “**obedient**” is an incorrect translation.

Instead, a more literal translation of Peter’s words would be: “**as children of obedience**”<sup>163</sup>. And the reason this tiny modification matters is: this phrase that contains two nouns referring to ancestry and obedience closely parallels the language used in several other passages of the Bible.

Please notice the mention of “**sons**” in this next passage and how it parallels Peter’s mention of “**children**”. Also, please notice how the word “**sons**” is paired with the preposition “**of**” just before a description of “**disobedience**”. Truly, the phrase “**sons of disobedience**” was used by Paul to describe all people who live as the direct opposite of the “**children of obedience**”.

Paul wrote to the saints of the church in Ephesus: **And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.**<sup>164</sup>

The first thing we should note from this passage is: there is a spirit of darkness guiding “**the sons of disobedience**”, just as there is a SPIRIT of light guiding the “**children of obedience**”<sup>165</sup>! So, every person is being influenced by either the spirit of satan, or the SPIRIT of GOD!

Also, the “**children of obedience**” who have been saved by the blood of JESUS were all once “**children of wrath**” and “**sons of disobedience**”. Yes, every born-again Christian at one time lived as the rest of the world does, in some kind of sinful rebellion against GOD<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>162</sup> 1 Peter 1:13-17

<sup>163</sup> [https://biblehub.com/text/1\\_peter/1-14.htm](https://biblehub.com/text/1_peter/1-14.htm)

<sup>164</sup> Ephesians 2:1-3

<sup>165</sup> Romans 8:14

<sup>166</sup> Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:10

But when we repented and put our faith in JESUS, to follow Him in obedience to the Bible, the SPIRIT made us alive<sup>167</sup>, He set us free from satan's bondage<sup>168</sup>, and He made us spiritual sons and daughters of GOD<sup>169</sup>!

Meanwhile, everyone who has not yet repented of their sins and put their faith in JESUS to follow Him in obedience to GOD's Word is still a child of satan<sup>170</sup>. They are **“the sons of disobedience”** mentioned in three separate passages of the Bible<sup>171</sup>, and they will face GOD's wrath on judgment day if they continue on the path of sin.<sup>172</sup>

Therefore, Scripture teaches that people are either children of satan or children of GOD; and ultimately: their obedience to GOD's Word is the deciding factor.

<sup>173</sup>

JESUS described this principle, when He explained: **“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**<sup>174</sup>

Many of those that JESUS called **“the sons of the wicked one”** have been deceived by satan into thinking they are children of GOD! But JESUS can distinguish between His family members and satan's family members by one very specific trait: “Do they **‘practice lawlessness’**, or do they practice righteousness?”.

JESUS knows that there will be many deceived people when He returns; people who will wrongly think they are GOD's children and His Disciples. So, JESUS warned: **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in**

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<sup>167</sup> Ephesians 2:4-5

<sup>168</sup> 2 Timothy 2:25-26

<sup>169</sup> Romans 8:14

<sup>170</sup> 1 John 3:10

<sup>171</sup> Ephesians 2:1-6, Ephesians 5:1-8, Colossians 3:1-10

<sup>172</sup> Ephesians 5:6-7

<sup>173</sup> Luke 8:21

<sup>174</sup> Matthew 13:37-43

**Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”<sup>175</sup>**

Please understand: **“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”**<sup>176</sup> Every type of **“sin is lawlessness”**, not just certain terrible sins like pedophilia, murder, or witchcraft! Sadly, many deceived people think these warnings of JESUS don’t apply to them because they don’t commit certain terrible sins that are obviously very wrong.

Meanwhile, the Bible says: **“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**<sup>177</sup>

Hell will not just be the eternal destiny of men like Hitler, Stalin, or Mao Zedong who murdered millions to gain and keep their demonic earthy kingdoms. No, a place in Hell is also reserved for those who refuse to believe GOD’s Word, for those who practice the things that the Bible calls “abominations”, for those who commit sexual immorality, for those who practice magic, for those who worship anything other than their Creator, and for everyone who loves, believes, or speaks lies<sup>178</sup>!

All these things are evil because they demonstrate disobedience to the Laws of Almighty GOD<sup>179</sup>! Meanwhile all GOD’s children demonstrate that GOD is their Father by obeying His Commandments<sup>180</sup>! And this, Brothers and Sisters, is the plain message declared in Scripture that anyone can see, when they look for the truth in: all the Bible and the Bible alone!

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<sup>175</sup> Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>176</sup> 1 John 3:4

<sup>177</sup> Revelation 21:7-8

<sup>178</sup> Revelation 22:15

<sup>179</sup> Revelation 22:14-15, Matthew 19:17

<sup>180</sup> 1 John 5:3

### Chapter 3: Love, Language, and Lawlessness

As lawlessness spreads out like a dark cloud over the entire earth, there aren't many words in the English language more powerful (or more misunderstood) than the word: "**love**".

In the 1960s, antiwar protestors marched carrying signs with the words: "Make Love, Not War". In this way, they attempted to redefined the word "**love**" to make it synonymous with rampant sexual immorality.

In the 1970s, homosexuals carried signs that declared: "Gay love, it's the real thing". Meanwhile, they committed acts the Bible calls "abominations"<sup>181</sup> and claimed "**love**" was the justification for their sin.

Then, in 2015, after the Supreme Court of the United States legalized homosexual marriage, those old immoral slogans were retired as the state-sponsored celebrations of lawlessness began. The protestors of the 60s and the 70s revealed: they were now occupying key positions of national power; and sinners rejoiced while they proudly hoisted signs that proclaimed "Love wins".

Thus, several years after the Obergefell-Hodges case was wrongly decided in the U.S. Supreme Court, deceived people everywhere proudly parade signs that say: "Love is love". And they gleefully display that particular phrase because they now believe that homosexual marriages are just as valid as an expression of "**love**" as any heterosexual marriage.

With this background in mind, we should ask: Does the Bible record any "righteous", Biblically-approved "**love**" between people of the same gender? And the answer is: Absolutely!<sup>182</sup>

However, the Bible never records any righteous person expressing "**sensual love**" towards someone of the same gender! In fact, Scripture strictly prohibits such expressions of love!<sup>183</sup>

Please consider: Do you "**love**" your mother, grandmother, father, or grandfather? Would the "**love**" you have for your grandparents or your parents lead you to want to marry them? Could such love "righteously" express itself sensually? Absolutely not!<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> 'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.' Leviticus 18:22

<sup>182</sup> 1 Samuel 18:1

<sup>183</sup> 'If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.' Leviticus 20:13

<sup>184</sup> Leviticus 18:6-10

Obviously, there are different types of **love**, therefore the slogan: "Love is love" is a dangerous lie! The **love** we have for our parents is different from the **love** we have for our spouse! And, by redefining and twisting the English word "**love**", satan is causing lawlessness to increase exponentially!

So, now that we understand "**the betrothal perspective**" and what the Bible actually teaches about "**the children of GOD**"<sup>185</sup> and "**the children of the devil**"<sup>186</sup>, we are ready to begin addressing the topic of "**love**", as it is described in Scripture.

But we must begin by noting: "the Septuagint" was the name given to the ancient Greek translation of the Scriptures that JESUS and His Apostles quoted from whenever they cited a passage from Genesis to Malachi<sup>187</sup>.

And, in the Septuagint, there are three very different Greek words used in Scripture that are all translated into English as the single word: "**love**".<sup>188</sup>

The Greek noun "**Éros**"<sup>189</sup> describes sensual love. And this type of love places a higher value on a particular person or group over others for sensual or physical reasons.

The Greek verb "**Philéo**"<sup>190</sup><sup>191</sup> describes relational love. And this type of love places a higher value on a particular person or group over others for experiential or relational reasons.

And the Greek noun "**Agápe**"<sup>192</sup><sup>193</sup> was eventually used in Scripture to describe redemptive love. And this type of love places a higher value on a particular person or group over others for spiritual or redemptive reasons.

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<sup>185</sup> Romans 9:8, Philippians 2:15, 1 John 3:1

<sup>186</sup> 1 John 3:10, John 8:44, Matthew 13:38

<sup>187</sup> In "Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey" Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno list 340 places where the New Testament cites the Septuagint but only 33 places where it cites from the Masoretic Text instead of the Septuagint (G. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey, 25-32).

<sup>188</sup> Some teachers claim that "Storge" is a fourth type of love found in Scripture; but because Paul uses the prefix "Philo" in Romans 12:10 in combination with the word "Storge" (φιλόστοργοι) we can see "Storge" does not mean "love". "Philo" was commonly used as a prefix with other words to describe the love of something. (i.e., philosophy = the love of wisdom) "Storge" means "natural affection" or "instinctual affection", not "love". So, Paul was describing that we should "love" the "natural affection" we should feel towards our brothers and sisters in CHRIST.

<sup>189</sup> Proverbs 7:18, Proverbs 30:16 ABP

<sup>190</sup> fil-eh'-o

<sup>191</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:22, Titus 3:15, John 21:17

<sup>192</sup> ag-ah'-pay

<sup>193</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 1 John 4:7-21, Jude 1:20-21



Each expression of love involves valuing a person or a particular group over others. However, the reasons for the higher evaluation change when discussing the three forms of love.

For example, “**Éros**” love values one person above other people for physical or sensual reasons, and expresses itself in physically intimate ways. Therefore, this type of love must only ever be expressed privately towards a spouse inside a Biblically sanctioned, life-long marriage between one biological man and one biological woman<sup>194</sup>. Consequently, all non-marital expressions of “**Éros**” love are labeled “**sexual immorality**” in the Bible<sup>195</sup>.

And, to help us see how the concept of “**Éros**” is portrayed in Scripture, we should note: in the Septuagint, the Greek word “**Éros**”<sup>196</sup> was used in Proverbs 7:18 within a sinful invitation issued by a wicked adulteress. There, the word was very clearly used to describe a form of “**sensual love**” expressed between two people.

Before describing: “**Her house is the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death.**”<sup>197</sup>, Proverbs recorded the immoral woman saying: “**Come, and let us enjoy love until the morning. Come, and let us embrace in love. For my husband is not at home, but has gone on a long journey.**”<sup>198</sup>

The second word translated as “**love**” in this passage is the Greek term: “**Éros**”. And it clearly describes a physical manifestation of sensual passion. Plus, in this case it was a sinful expression of “**Éros love**” being discussed; a sin that the Bible calls “**adultery**”<sup>199</sup>.

Meanwhile, between a husband and his wife “**Éros love**” is something GOD designed, from the very beginning! Therefore, JESUS said: “**Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ‘and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?**”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>195</sup> For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. Acts 15:28-29

<sup>196</sup> ἔρως

<sup>197</sup> Proverbs 7:27 LXX

<sup>198</sup> Proverbs 7:18-19 LXX

<sup>199</sup> Leviticus 20:10

<sup>200</sup> Matthew 19:4-5

JESUS was quoting the text of the book of Genesis, from a time before the fall of mankind. There the Bible described the origin of marriage, and the purpose of what later became known as: **Éros** love. And that purpose is: to bring a husband and wife together as “**one flesh**”.

Marital, **Éros** love was the basis of how Adam and Eve could fulfill GOD's command to: “**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...**”<sup>201</sup> However, when **Éros love** is taken out of the context of Biblical marriage, it always becomes sinful! Then, even as it might result in the fruit of physical life, it simultaneously brings forth the fruit of spiritual death! This is why Scripture explains: **Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**<sup>202</sup>

Truly, **Éros love** is a wonderful thing that GOD designed; but **only** in the private context of a Biblically approved marriage! However, satan has twisted the good thing that GOD created, in order to tempt the world into expressing **Éros love** in sinful ways.

Therefore, Paul warned the saints in Corinth: **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.**<sup>203</sup>

Through the cross of JESUS, only those who repent of the sins of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, sodomy, idolatry, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, or extortion will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. But those who refuse to repent of these sins will inherit the cursed darkness of Hell.

And the fact is: 4 of the 10 sins listed in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:9 involve expressing **Éros** love in forbidden ways that violate the righteous laws of GOD, our Creator.

So, now that we understand how **Éros love** must be reserved for **marriage**, and marriage must be defined as the lifelong union of one biological man and one biological woman<sup>204</sup> (just as GOD designed when He created Adam and Eve); we can move on to the next type of love.

In English translations of the Bible, the Greek word “**Philéo**” is also translated “**love**”. But, unlike **Éros love's** sensual method of evaluation, **Philéo love** values one person above another for experiential or relational reasons.

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<sup>201</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>202</sup> Hebrews 13:4

<sup>203</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

<sup>204</sup> Matthew 19:4-6

Therefore, this type of love is typically expressed within a family, or some similar relationship, where two or more people are experientially connected by some common values, location, community, covenant, or ancestry. Consequently, **Philéo love** can be defined as “**Relational Love**”.

When Paul wrote: “**Admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children**”<sup>205</sup>, he used the root of the word **Philéo** twice. And the **Philéo love** described here between family members is based on the fact that they have “experienced” a familial “relationship” with one another.

Paul did not command the young women to express “**Philéo love**” towards someone else’s husband or children. No, he commanded them to express “**Philéo love**” towards “**their**” own husbands and children. But “**Philéo love**” is more than just **love** for our *natural* families!

Because Christians should have **Philéo love** towards their spiritual brothers and sisters in the family of GOD, Paul wrote to Titus: **All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.**<sup>206</sup> And the word translated “**love**” in that passage is: **Philéo**.

In fact, JESUS used the same word, when He said: “**He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**”<sup>207</sup> So, we must love JESUS more than our earthly families, to be worthy of Him.

When we consider the Bible’s teachings, this is logical since our earthly familial relationships only last a lifetime, but our spiritual relationship with JESUS will last forever! We might even conclude, this type of spiritual logic led JESUS to say: “**My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.**”<sup>208</sup>

So, **Philéo love** definitely applies to our spiritual family in CHRIST, and it should be even more intense than the **Philéo love** we have towards our earthly families; especially if some of our family members do not “**love**” the JESUS revealed in the Holy Bible.

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<sup>205</sup> Titus 2:4

<sup>206</sup> Titus 3:15

<sup>207</sup> Matthew 10:37

<sup>208</sup> Luke 8:21

After all, we can be statistically sure that Paul the Apostle had some family members who did not love JESUS<sup>209</sup>, yet Paul wrote: **If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.**<sup>210</sup>

Paul used the Greek word **Philéo** in this passage; a passage that curses anyone who does not “**love**” JESUS with experiential, relationship-based, love.

And JESUS mentioned this same type of love, when He said: “**The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.**”<sup>211</sup>

Just as we discovered in our previous studies regarding “**the betrothal perspective**” and how we become “**children of GOD**” through our relationship with JESUS; our LORD makes it clear that “**the Father loves**” us with **Philéo love**. And He does this “**because**” we **love** JESUS with **Philéo love** and demonstrate our **Phileo love** by becoming His disciples!

Likewise, JESUS used the word **Philéo** when He said: “**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**”<sup>212</sup>

JESUS does not shepherd every child of Adam with His rod of “rebuke and chastening”! No, only GOD’s “**Children**” (the “sheep” of the MESSIAH) experience the Good Shepherd’s rod and staff.<sup>213</sup>

Meanwhile, to become part of GOD’s flock, every child of Adam must first “**hear the voice**” of JESUS (as recorded in His Word), and decide to “**follow**” Him!<sup>214</sup>

Truly, these passages that use the word **Philéo** prove we should have an experiential, **relational love** towards: JESUS, the Father, our brothers and sisters in CHRIST, and even our earthly families; especially towards our spouse and children (if applicable).

And **Philéo love** is clearly based on valuing such people higher than others, specifically because we actively experience ongoing relationships with them.

Meanwhile, neither **Philéo love** or **Éros love** is mentioned in Paul’s famous teaching on “**love**” found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 13.<sup>215</sup> No, in that passage the Greek word Paul used for “**love**” was “**Agápe**”!

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<sup>209</sup> At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 2 Timothy 4:16

<sup>210</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:22a

<sup>211</sup> John 16:27

<sup>212</sup> Revelation 3:19

<sup>213</sup> Hebrews 12:7-8

<sup>214</sup> John 10:27

<sup>215</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

There Paul explained: **Agápe love** is slow to become angry<sup>216</sup> and it operates in kindness<sup>217</sup>. **Agápe love** does not boast about itself<sup>218</sup>, nor does it puff itself up in pride<sup>219</sup>. **Agápe love** never conducts itself in shameful ways<sup>220</sup>, and it never selfishly seeks after its own gain<sup>221</sup>. **Agápe love** is not easily provoked to anger<sup>222</sup>, and it does not count up<sup>223</sup> all of the harmful<sup>224</sup> things done to it. Finally, **Agápe love** never rejoices at unrighteousness<sup>225</sup>, instead it rejoices together with the Truth<sup>226</sup>.

This is how the Bible describes **Agápe love**, and this is also how the Bible describes our amazing GOD! After all, the Apostle John wrote: **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.**<sup>227</sup>

Obviously, when John wrote "**GOD is love**", he used the word "**Agápe**"! So, Paul was describing GOD in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, at the same time He described "**Agápe love**". Also, Paul told us we should each live out the **Agápe love** he described, by saying: **Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love.**<sup>228</sup>

Yes, as those who have received such great **Agápe love** from GOD, we must walk in **Agápe love** towards others! And GOD showed us stunning **Agápe love** while we were still His enemies.

So, Paul wrote: **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies**

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<sup>216</sup> mak-roth-oo-meh'-o: to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others

<sup>217</sup> khraste-yoo'-om-ahee: to show one's self mild, to be kind, use kindness

<sup>218</sup> per-per-yoo'-om-ahee: to boast [of] one's self

<sup>219</sup> foo-see-o'-o: to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell up; to puff up, make proud

<sup>220</sup> as-kay-mon-eh'-o: to act unbecomingly

<sup>221</sup> dzay-teh'-o: to seek; heh-ow-too': himself, herself, itself, themselves

<sup>222</sup> par-ox-oo'-no: provoke, arouse to anger

<sup>223</sup> log-id'-zom-ahee: to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over

<sup>224</sup> kak-os': of a bad nature, not such as it ought to be; base, wrong, wicked, troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful (see: "**harm**" in Acts 16:28, Acts 28:5, Romans 13:10; and consider "**injury**" in place of "**evil**" in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and 1 Peter 3:9, as described in Matthew 5:38-39)

<sup>225</sup> ad-ee-kee'-ah: injustice, unrighteousness of heart and life, a deed violating law and justice, act of unrighteousness

<sup>226</sup> al-ay'-thi-a: what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth

<sup>227</sup> 1 John 4:7-9

<sup>228</sup> Ephesians 5:1-2a

**we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**<sup>229</sup>

Using Paul's language, we can say: "**while we were still sinners**" in the past tense, "**we were enemies**" of GOD. But GOD sent His only begotten Son, and JESUS willingly laid down His innocent life, to "**reconcile**" us to Himself, to "**justify us by His blood**", and redeem us<sup>230</sup> from satan's kingdom of darkness!

And because GOD showed such amazing **Agápe love** to us when we were still His enemies, JESUS taught us: "**You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor' and 'hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**"<sup>231</sup>

We don't "**love our enemies**" because we are physically attracted to them by **Éros love**. Likewise, we don't "**love our enemies**" because we are in a relationship with them that would generate **Philéo love**. No, we "**love our enemies**" because we desire to be like our Father in Heaven who showed us **Agápe love** when we were still His enemies!

Our Father in Heaven shows **Agápe love** to His enemies because He doesn't desire that anyone suffer the eternal agonies of Hell! And we know this is true because the Apostle Peter declared: **The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**<sup>232</sup>

Friends, GOD does not want anyone to be eternally separated from Him in the lake of fire and sulfur that is "the second death"!<sup>233</sup> Instead He desires that all should come to repentance! So, GOD showed great **Agápe love** to the world, by sending His only begotten Son. And, JESUS showed great **Agápe love** by laying down His life to save all who will come to Father through Him!

Likewise, GOD shows great **Agápe love** to the world each day, by bringing rain, by sending sunshine, by supplying food, by sustaining life, and by providing us with many wonderful gifts to enjoy. But if someone rejects GOD's many displays of **Agápe love**, it will eventually lead to their doom.

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<sup>229</sup> Romans 5:8-10

<sup>230</sup> Titus 2:14

<sup>231</sup> Matthew 5:43-45

<sup>232</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>233</sup> Revelation 20:14

Therefore, Paul wrote: **Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”**.<sup>234</sup>

**[GOD will render] eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.**<sup>235</sup>

Sin is like an ocean, and GOD's **Agápe love** is like a life-preserver mercifully tossed out from the safety of the shore to save those who are in the process of drowning.

If someone takes hold of GOD's **Agápe love**, JESUS will rescue them from the waters of sin so they can experience the **Philéo love** of GOD! Yes, as people “**betrothed**” to JESUS, they become covenant “**sons and daughters of GOD**”! And because of these divine relationships they then know GOD's sanctifying **Philéo love**.

But if someone keeps refusing the **Agápe love** of GOD, they will never know His **Philéo love**. Instead, they will eventually die in their sin, and face the indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish of satan's eternal destiny.

Therefore, to imitate our GOD (who is **love**), we must show **Agápe love** to those who treat us wrongfully. We must pray for them, do good to them, and bless them. And we do this because, like GOD, we don't want anyone to perish! No, we desire that all people come to repentance before it is too late, so they can experience the glorious **Philéo love** of both the Father and the Son!

And because we are commanded to show **Agápe love**, *even to our enemies*, we can call “**Agápe love**”: “**redemptive love**”! And it is this “**Redemptive love**” that patiently endures the hostilities and injustices sinners commit, all because it desires sinners to repent and enter into a saving relationship with JESUS CHRIST.

Now, do you remember how we said earlier: “each expression of love involves valuing a person or a particular group over others”? It is obvious that proper

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<sup>234</sup> Romans 2:4-6

<sup>235</sup> Romans 2:7-11

expressions of **Éros love** involve a person valuing their spouse over all others in physical ways.

And expressions of **Philéo love** involve a person valuing people they have certain things in common with, such as physical or spiritual ancestry, values, interests, or any other type of relationship foundation.

But, when it comes to **Agápe love**, who takes second place so we can value those we show Agápe love to more than someone else?

Well, because redemptive "**Agápe love**" requires those who demonstrate it to be meek and kind, even while patiently enduring wrongs, "**Agápe love**" actually requires us prioritize others over ourselves! And this means that we can also call "**Agápe love**": "**self-sacrificial love**".

Therefore, Paul wrote: **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**<sup>236</sup>

Likewise, Paul commanded: **Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.**<sup>237</sup>

Truly, these passages teach us how to **love** as JESUS **loves**! However: even self-sacrificial, redemptive, **Agápe love** does not seek to establish or to maintain deep relationships with unrepentant sinners who are living in rebellion to GOD. Especially because that rebellion will land such people in Hell!

Therefore, Scripture declares: **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."**<sup>238</sup>

Truly, nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to show the Biblical "**Philéo**" **love** that characterizes relationships towards unrepentant sinners! Instead, we are

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<sup>236</sup> Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>237</sup> Romans 12:9-10

<sup>238</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:14-18



instructed to show **both “Philéo” and “Agápe” love** to our brothers and sisters in CHRIST!

And this is why Scripture declares: **I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.**<sup>239</sup>

Christians are commanded to withdraw all expressions of **Philéo love** from anyone who calls themselves a brother or sister in the LORD, if they practice sin and refuse to repent. We still have **Agápe love** for such people, and we desire for them to repent of their sins before it is too late, but their sin brings separation.

Meanwhile, if such a person demonstrates genuine repentance, they should be joyfully welcomed back into relationship! Therefore, repentance is the doorway to the restoration of **“Philéo love”**.

As JESUS said: **“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”**<sup>240</sup>

According to our LORD, the forgiveness that restores relationships and all expressions of **Philéo love** is pre-conditioned to require repentance. Therefore, the words **“I repent”** are the key that opens the door of restoration and reconciliation with GOD and with His true Church!

And this begins to reveal how the foundational **“Philéo love”** that all relationships are built on is conditional, according to the Bible! After all, **Philéo love** is expressed within relationships where two or more people are connected by common interests, values, community, or ancestry.

Yes, JESUS used the word **“Philéo”** when He explained His relationship with the Father by saying: **“The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.”**<sup>241</sup>

Likewise, JESUS used the word **“Philéo”** when He explained our relationship with the Father by saying: **“The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.”**<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:11

<sup>240</sup> Luke 17:3-4

<sup>241</sup> John 5:20

<sup>242</sup> John 16:27

But not everyone can say they enjoy GOD's **Philéo love**! No, only those "**betroted**" to His Son and welcomed into His family as "**children of GOD**" can make that claim! And this is why we had to discover what the Bible had to say about those Biblical relationships before we learned about the three Greek words we translate into English as "**love**".

Truly, many who call JESUS, "LORD, LORD", are counting on His **Agápe love** to save them, but they have not actually repented of their sins to take hold of His amazing **Agápe love**!

If they would only repent, then they would experience the life-changing, **Philéo love** of JESUS that actually leads to transformation! But because they refuse to repent and enter into an obedient, submissive relationship with JESUS, one day He will say to them: "**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**"<sup>243</sup>

Friends, JESUS is omniscient! He knows everything, including all those He will say these words to! So why does JESUS tell these doomed souls "**I never knew you**"? Well, the answer is: JESUS is using the word "**know**" to refer to experiencing **Philéo-relationship love** with a person.

These people will have "known" JESUS like most people "know" George Washington. We have never met George Washington; we have never experienced a relationship with him. And if we were to meet him, he would say: "**I never knew you**".

Likewise, many know about JESUS, but they don't actually know JESUS relationally! Therefore, John tells us all how to test if we really "**know**" JESUS in a saving way!

He explains: **Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**<sup>244</sup>

Those who have experienced both the **Agápe love** and **Philéo love** of JESUS have learned: JESUS did not abolish His commandments! No, instead He taught them, reinforced them<sup>245</sup>, and commanded His Apostles to do the same<sup>246</sup>!

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<sup>243</sup> Matthew 7:23

<sup>244</sup> 1 John 2:3-4

<sup>245</sup> Matthew 19:17-19

<sup>246</sup> Matthew 5:19, Matthew 28:20, John 14:21, 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 5:2-3, 2 John 1:6, Revelation 14:12, Revelation 22:14

But people who don't "**know**" JESUS experientially through a covenant relationship with Him, can't see through satan's lawless lies! Thus, they fail to perceive that **JESUS is the same yesterday, today, and forever**<sup>247</sup>!

Meanwhile, we who truly "know JESUS must remember: The Bible has three distinct words for "**Love**"! However, translators only use one English word! So, to understand all we have learned together, we must verify which Greek word is being translated, when an English translation of the Bible uses the word "**Love**".

Also, we must distinguish between those three very different types of "**love**" when we read signs that say: "Make love, not war", "Gay love, it's the real thing", "Love wins", and "Love is love"!

Obviously, each of those declarations is relying on people confusing **Éros love** with **Philéo love** or **Agápe love**! The fact is: the sound-minded, Biblical Christian has no objections to two biological men or two biological women expressing **Philéo love** or **Agápe love** towards each other!

No, all sound-minded students of the Bible know that Scripture only objects to people of the same biological gender expressing **Éros love** towards each other!

Likewise, all sound-minded students of the Bible can easily see: **Éros love** is very different from **Philéo love** and **Agápe love**! But because the word "**love**" is being cheapened, tarnished, abused, and twisted, many are being deceived; and lawlessness is increasing and spreading like never before.

JESUS warned us about the times that would immediately herald His return, by saying: "**Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**"<sup>248</sup> And friends, we must not miss that fact that JESUS sees a direct connection between **love and His law**!

About this connection, John writes: **By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**<sup>249</sup>

We can prove we **love** our brothers and sisters in CHRIST, as well as GOD Himself simply by keeping His commandments! And the truth is, **love** never rejoices at unrighteousness.

So, those who carry signs about "**love**", while celebrating unrighteousness and the violation of GOD's commandments have no idea what "**love**" really is!

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<sup>247</sup> Hebrews 13:8

<sup>248</sup> Matthew 24:12

<sup>249</sup> 1 John 5:2-3

Meanwhile, because we have earnest **Agápe love** for such people, let us pray for them. Let us speak the truth to them in real, redeeming **love**. And let us earnestly desire that they experience the **Philéo love** of GOD before it is too late.

After all, just after Paul explained that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of GOD, he added: **And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**<sup>250</sup>

The love of GOD is calling out to the people carrying those signs, just as it called out to us! So together, let's earnestly pray that they would respond to His amazing love by repenting! Only then can they enter into a saving covenant relationship with the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and know His **Philéo love**!

For this is the will of GOD revealed in the Scriptures; when we look to all of the Bible and the Bible alone!

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<sup>250</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:11

## Chapter 4: The Farmer, The Fruit, and The Final Harvest

There once was a wealthy man who purchased 10 abandoned farms. He hired reliable people to manage each of the farms, and he provided each manager a place to live on the farm they were hired to manage.

He instructed his managers to spare no expense as they worked to bring each farm back into fruitful operation. And he authorized the managers to hire workers to help them restore all 10 of the farms.

At each of those 10 locations, they purchased the necessary equipment and got to work. They removed all of the overgrowth, they tilled the hardened, compacted ground, they fertilized the loosened soil, and labored each day to make the fields ready.

Next, the managers and the workers designed and built top-of-the-line irrigation systems to keep the fields well-watered, and the soil consistently moist.

Finally, after much hard toil, the time came to sow the ground with seed. And the managers and the workers worked very hard planting the prepared soil with the very best seeds available.

Once the seeds were sown, they built ingenious devices to keep the birds from snatching those precious seeds from the soil they had worked so hard to prepare.

Then, after they dealt with the birds, they had to build ways to keep out the rabbits and other hungry animals that wanted to eat the fruits of their labor.

Later in the year, at five of the farms, the fields produced a great harvest; and the wealthy owner of the farms was very pleased. So, he rewarded his managers and their workers, and they celebrated the fruitful fields with great joy.

But at the remaining five farms, despite all of the same diligent efforts made by his managers and workers, the soil would not respond to their efforts by producing good fruit.

Instead of useful vegetation, the soil at three of the unfruitful farms only produced weeds and briars. So, all of the labor and all of the resources the wealthy man invested only served to prove: those farms were not useful to him.

Likewise, the soil at the remaining two unfruitful farms would not even produce weeds. Instead, the soil at those farms remained barren and lifeless, also proving those locations were not useful to their owner.

So, after paying his laborers and managers for their hard work, what do you think that man would do with the five farms that would not produce good fruit? If you

guessed: “he would sell those farms and focus his investments on the five fruitful farms”, you would be correct!

About this, Scripture says: **For the soil<sup>251</sup> which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears plants<sup>252</sup> useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.**<sup>253</sup>

And that passage flowed out of the words of our LORD, who said: **“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”**<sup>254</sup>

GOD's Word is like a seed that can bring spiritual life and the abundant fruit of righteousness to all who will receive it. But hardened hearts allow the devil to snatch GOD's word away. Partially-hardened stony hearts have hard places that resist the Word and prevent it from taking root. And weedy hearts allow worldly things to choke out their obedience to the Word. Thus, all three of these soils are fruitless.

And it would seem that only a fool would keep perpetually investing their resources into land that refused to produce good fruit that was useful to the land-owner! But that wealthy man in our parable was no fool!

No, he **tested** all 10 farms by investing equally in each of them. Some of the testing proved there were five farms worth keeping. And some of the testing proved there were five farms that were not worthy of any further investment.

Yes, the investments that owner made into those 10 farms were a way to **test** each of them. And when the time of harvest came: he stopped investing in the unfruitful farms, so he could enjoy those farms that produced good fruit for him.

Similarly, Scripture tells us: **“The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the hearts.”**<sup>255</sup> **“Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to**

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<sup>251</sup> Literally “soil” Strong's Number G1093 – ghay: arable land, the ground

<sup>252</sup> Literally “plants” Strong's Number G1008 – bot-an'-ay: an herb fit for fodder, green herb, growing plant

<sup>253</sup> Hebrews 6:7-8

<sup>254</sup> Luke 8:11-14

<sup>255</sup> Proverbs 17:3

**an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.”<sup>256</sup>**

And: **“We speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.”<sup>257</sup>**

Yes, the man in our little parable can be compared to Almighty GOD! And the investments the owner of those farms made can be compared to GOD’s “Agápe love”. So, the truth is: GOD’s amazing Agápe love has been revealed to the world as a gracious investment that will test the hearts of every person!

Or in other words, the self-sacrificial, redemptive Agápe love of GOD shown to the world can also be called: **“investment love”**. And like any other investment, GOD’s Agape love investments will eventually be withdrawn from those who don’t respond by bearing good fruit! Yes, this was the point of the LORD’s “Parable of the Talents”.

In that parable JESUS said: **“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.”<sup>258</sup>**

**“After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”<sup>259</sup>**

**“He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”<sup>260</sup>**

**“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you**

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<sup>256</sup> Psalms 7:9

<sup>257</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:4b

<sup>258</sup>

<sup>259</sup> Matthew 25:19-21

<sup>260</sup> Matthew 25:22-23

**have not scattered seed. ‘And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’”<sup>261</sup>**

**“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ‘So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ‘Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.’”<sup>262</sup>**

**“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”<sup>263</sup>**

As verse 27 indicated: a talent is a sum of **“money”** that is equal to a certain weight. And, according to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon<sup>264</sup>, in Israel a talent of silver weighed about 100 pounds and a talent of gold weighed about 200 pounds.

JESUS explained that the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a man who had to go on a journey for a time. That man left his wealth with His servants, so that they would invest his money and receive some returns on their investments.

Two of the servants invested their lord’s money, and one did not. The two that gained returns on their investments of the riches of their master were welcomed into his home, and they ruled over his Kingdom with him in great joy!

But the one who gained no returns because he did not invest his master’s riches, was cast into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

By bestowing such riches on those servants, the master tested each one to see how they would value what he valued! If they valued the riches he entrusted to them, they would prove to be good and faithful servants. But if they did not value the master’s riches, they would prove to be wicked, unfaithful servants.

Thus, the riches of the master were a way of **testing** his servants to see which ones were good and faithful, and which ones were wicked and unfaithful. And when the master returned to settle accounts with his servants, it is like the time of the harvest, when all will be judged impartially by their fruits!

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<sup>261</sup> Matthew 25:24-25

<sup>262</sup> Matthew 25:26-28

<sup>263</sup> Matthew 25:29-30

<sup>264</sup> Under G5007: tal'-an-ton



Yes, if we return to our original parable, our **“Father in heaven... makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”**<sup>265</sup> But at **“the end of the age”** when the earth is **“harvested”**<sup>266</sup>, those who have not responded to GOD’s Agape love by bearing good fruit will not continue to receive such love!

About this, JESUS said: **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear [the Son of Man’s] voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”**<sup>267</sup>

Yes, the harvest will occur when the master returns, and **“He will... gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”**<sup>268</sup>

So, after explaining how the Word of GOD is like a seed<sup>269</sup> and people are like four different types of soil that respond to GOD’s Word in different ways, JESUS said regarding **“the [seed] that fell on the good ground”**, it was like **“those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”**<sup>270</sup>

Obviously, such people are like the farms that responded to the owner’s investments by bearing good **“fruit”**. And, after the harvest, the owner will keep those farms and enjoy them forever.

But JESUS our King plainly taught: **Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**<sup>271</sup> Yes, just like the unfruitful farms that were sold by their owner, GOD will cast every unfruitful tree **“into the fire”** at the end of the age!

Sometimes Scripture compares people to soil, sometimes Scripture compares people to plants, but in both cases the point is made that GOD shows patient kindness and abundant love to people because He desires that all people everywhere **“repent”**<sup>272</sup> and bear **“good fruit”**!

Meanwhile, John the Baptist explained that good fruit is always: **“worthy of repentance”**<sup>273</sup>! He said: **“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not**

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<sup>265</sup> Matthew 5:45

<sup>266</sup> Matthew 13:39

<sup>267</sup> John 5:28-29

<sup>268</sup> Matthew 3:12

<sup>269</sup> Luke 8:11

<sup>270</sup> Luke 8:15

<sup>271</sup> Matthew 7:19

<sup>272</sup> 2 Peter 3:9, Acts 17:30

<sup>273</sup> Matthew 3:8-10

**think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."**<sup>274</sup>

The Jewish people John spoke to that day believed that being *physical descendants* of Abraham would somehow earn them GOD's approval, but John explained: GOD was not concerned with their genetic family tree!

No, on the contrary, GOD was concerned with the fruit they themselves produced! Therefore, GOD required them to "**do the works of Abraham**"<sup>275</sup> and prove how *they* would bear good fruit like Abraham bore! And such good fruit is always associated with "**repentance**" because: sin is disobedience to GOD<sup>276</sup>.

However, "**repentance**" is the decision to turn from sin, in order to obey GOD instead! And Scripture records that Abraham obeyed GOD, even when he faced the ultimate test.

It is written: **Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."**<sup>277</sup>

GOD gave Abraham a very, very difficult command to **test** his obedience, and when Abraham obeyed, we can conclude: he bore good fruit and proved to the LORD he was like a good tree!

Thus, Hebrews records: **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.**<sup>278</sup>

If Abraham had not first trusted GOD, he never would have obeyed the commandment he was given. But because Abraham knew he could trust GOD in all things, he obeyed GOD's command; and he received Isaac back as figuratively risen from the dead!

But this lesson regarding how Abraham's faith led him to bear the good fruit of obedience must be remembered when we seek to understand the most famous

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<sup>274</sup> Matthew 3:8-10

<sup>275</sup> John 8:39

<sup>276</sup> 1 John 3:4

<sup>277</sup> Genesis 22:1-2

<sup>278</sup> Hebrews 11:17-19

passage of the Bible. Yes, in the greatest display of Agápe love that will ever exist, JESUS died for the sins of the world!

And about this, JESUS said: **“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**<sup>279</sup>

Then, immediately after saying those words, JESUS added: **“He who believes in [GOD’s Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”**<sup>280</sup>

Many people read John 3:16 out of context. Therefore, they ignore how the Bible teaches in many different places that **“GOD tests our hearts”**. They forget how the Bible recorded the **“testing”** of Abraham. And they dismiss how Abraham’s faith was proven by his obedience.

Therefore, those who discard these many Biblical lessons wrongly teach that all people ever have to do is **“believe”** in JESUS. Then they read John 3:16 out of context.

Plus, they miss the fact that JESUS went on to talk about **“evil deeds”**, **“loving the darkness”**, **“practicing evil”**, **“hating the light”**, **“coming to the light”** and **“doing the truth”**.

Yes friends, there is more to being a disciple of JESUS than just **“believing”**, just as there is more to a house than its foundation!

For this reason, James wrote: **Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?**<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> John 3:14-17

<sup>280</sup> John 3:18-21

<sup>281</sup> James 2:19b-22

The Greek word James used, that translators rendered as “**works**”, is the same Greek word JESUS used, that translators rendered as “**deeds**”. The Greek word “**er'-gon**” is a term translated as “**works**” or “**deeds**” in English Bible versions, so these two English synonyms almost always point back to the same Greek word “**er'-gon**”<sup>282</sup>.

And, just as JESUS taught that every tree will be judged by its “**fruit**”, Scripture equally teaches that each person will be impartially judged by their “**deeds**”. In fact, in Scripture “**fruit**”<sup>283</sup> is a metaphorical representation of the Greek word “**er'-gon**”.

This is why Paul asked certain people who refused to repent and turn from their sins: “**Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness<sup>284</sup> and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’**”<sup>285</sup>

Then Paul explained that GOD will render: “**eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.**”<sup>286</sup>

Yes, Paul used the word “**er'-gon**” in Romans 2 as well; while he made the point that GOD pours out various manifestations of His love on all people to lead them to repentance! Thus, when people refuse to repent of their sinful disobedience to GOD, they are “**despising**” His loving kindness, and storing up wrath for themselves on the day of judgment, when the earth will be “**harvested**”<sup>287</sup>!

Like hard unrepentant soil that rejects GOD's seed, or like rocky soil that won't allow His seed to take root in every area of life, or like weedy soil that only bears the thorns and briars of worldly thinking, those who don't respond to GOD's agape love by bearing fruits “**worthy of repentance**” will face the wrath of GOD!

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<sup>282</sup> Strong's Number: G2041

<sup>283</sup> Strong's Number: G2590 (kar-pos' – fruit)

<sup>284</sup> Please note the reference to a typical condition of fruitless soil

<sup>285</sup> Romans 2:4-10

<sup>286</sup> Romans 2:7-11

<sup>287</sup> Revelation 14:15

So, Paul wrote to Titus: **For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**<sup>288</sup>

When presented as the Bible actually presents it, GOD's **grace** teaches us to "**repent and do works worthy of repentance**". When presented as the Bible actually presents it, GOD's **love** teaches us to "**repent and do works worthy of repentance**". And, when presented as the Bible actually presents it, the **cross** of JESUS CHRIST our LORD teaches us to "**repent and do works worthy of repentance**"!

Consequently, Paul summed up his entire ministry in the book of Acts by saying: **"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works worthy of<sup>289</sup> repentance."**<sup>290</sup>

In that declaration that explains (in Paul's own words) exactly what Paul taught; the Apostle used the word "**er'-gon**" in a positive way. He told everyone he met they should repent of their disobedience (which is called "**sin**"), turn to GOD, and "**do works**" worthy of true repentance.

But in other places, Paul wrote against certain "**works**", using the same Greek word "**er'-gon**". And those other passages have confused many "**untaught and unstable**" people to such a degree that they stumbled into what Peter called: "**the error of the wicked**"<sup>291</sup>.

For example, Paul used that same Greek word in Romans chapter 4, when he wrote: **For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God,**

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<sup>288</sup> Titus 2:11-14

<sup>289</sup> Literally "worthy of"; Strong's Number G514 "ax'-ee-os" weighing, having weight, having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much, befitting, congruous, corresponding to a thing (see also: Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:8, John 1:27 where the same word is properly translated)

<sup>290</sup> Acts 26:19-20

<sup>291</sup> 2 Peter 3:16-17

**and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.<sup>292</sup>**

Those who don't pay attention to details or context think that this passage contradicts the teaching of James we read earlier that specifically said: **“Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar”**.

But if we look at the context of Romans 4, we can easily see: Paul was using the word **“works”** to speak about a very different subject at that point.

Yes, just a few verses later, when defining the specific **“works”** he was referring to, Paul wrote: **Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.**<sup>293</sup>

As Acts chapter 15 records, the greatest controversy Paul ever faced was over **“circumcision”**! Both Paul and the Apostles in Jerusalem decided converted Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or follow a Levitical diet!

So, when Paul speaks of **“works”** in a negative way, you will always find the word **“circumcision”** (or the word **“food”**) mentioned as well!

Meanwhile, Paul taught Titus: **This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.**<sup>294</sup>

Paul never contradicted himself or the epistle we know as James<sup>295</sup>! No, Paul simply referred to Levitical diets and circumcision as fleshly **“works of the law”** that could not justify anyone. Meanwhile, he simultaneously labeled obedience to GOD's commandments as **“good works”** or **“works befitting repentance”**!

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<sup>292</sup> Romans 4:2-4

<sup>293</sup> Romans 4:9-12

<sup>294</sup> Titus 3:8a

<sup>295</sup> More literally, that epistle should be called “Jacob” or “Jacobos” since the author's name is Strong's Number G2385: “ee-ak'-o-bos” - the same as G2384 (ee-ak-obe') Graecized

Neither circumcision nor foods can commend us to GOD<sup>296</sup>! But many in the first century trusted in such fleshly things to justify themselves before their Creator. So, Paul was simply dealing with that ancient heresy in certain epistles, while urging all people everywhere to **“repent, turn to GOD, and do works worthy of repentance”**.

However, none of us can boast in our repentance or our good works because GOD loved us first, before we ever repented! And He revealed His great love to the entire world to lead us all to JESUS! Therefore, JESUS said: **“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”**<sup>297</sup>

Plus, JESUS also declared: **“If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all peoples to Myself.”**<sup>298</sup> And John added: **This He said, signifying by what death He would die.**<sup>299</sup>

Friends, the earth-shaking love of GOD was put on display for the world to see at the cross of JESUS our LORD! And when JESUS was lifted up from the earth on the cross, He allowed it to happen because He knew: His death was demonstrating GOD's glorious love to each and every soul!

The cross is how GOD proved His great love to all people! And it is how He draws people to JESUS, His amazing Son! But many reject the riches of GOD's love, and they despise His goodness.

Some refuse to repent of any of their sins, while others only repent of some of their sins. Still others allow the things of this world to choke out the fruit of obedience to GOD. And one day they will all endure eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth if they don't **“repent, turn to GOD, and do works worthy of repentance”**!

JESUS said to each of the seven churches of Revelation: **“I know your works”**<sup>300</sup> before He judged each one by their fruits! And JESUS made it clear, those who did not bear **“fruits worthy of repentance”**<sup>301</sup> would be **“vomited out of His mouth”**<sup>302</sup>, they would have their **“lampstand taken away”**<sup>303</sup>, they would learn **“they were dead”**<sup>304</sup> in their trespasses and sins<sup>305</sup>, or He would **“kill them with**

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<sup>296</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19, 1 Corinthians 8:8

<sup>297</sup> John 6:44a

<sup>298</sup> John 12:32

<sup>299</sup> John 12:33

<sup>300</sup> Revelation 2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8 and 3:15

<sup>301</sup> Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:8

<sup>302</sup> Revelation 3:16

<sup>303</sup> Revelation 2:5

<sup>304</sup> Revelation 3:1

<sup>305</sup> Ephesians 2:1-2

**death**"<sup>306</sup>, so that all the churches would know how JESUS said: **"I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."**<sup>307</sup>

Would a righteous bridegroom finalize a marriage with his bride if she proved to be unfaithful during their betrothal?<sup>308</sup> Would a loving father of the bridegroom allow his son to marry such an unfaithful wife?<sup>309</sup> If the Church is the betrothed Bride of CHRIST, but the marriage has not yet been finalized, what is GOD waiting for?

Clearly, He is sanctifying the bride<sup>310</sup>, testing her<sup>311</sup>, and at the time of the harvest<sup>312</sup>, His true Bride will be **"arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."**<sup>313</sup>

Obviously, the Bridegroom is away preparing a place for His Bride<sup>314</sup>. And when He returns, He will receive the virgins who kept themselves ready with oil in their lamps. Likewise, He will reject the virgins who were not ready, whose lamps were out of oil.<sup>315</sup>

And we must note: It is not the fault of JESUS or His Apostles that these teachings are no longer proclaimed throughout the earth!<sup>316</sup> No, they made these concepts very clear in many different ways! But false teachers have been ignoring these passages or explaining them away, while only holding onto certain texts they thought they understood. And they have led many souls astray in their error!<sup>317</sup>

Meanwhile, Paul had a Biblical view of GOD's agape love. Therefore, he wrote: **For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Revelation 2:23

<sup>307</sup> Revelation 2:23b

<sup>308</sup> Matthew 1:19

<sup>309</sup> Ezekiel 39:23

<sup>310</sup> Ephesians 5:26-27

<sup>311</sup> Exodus 16:4

<sup>312</sup> Matthew 13:37-43

<sup>313</sup> Revelation 19:8

<sup>314</sup> John 14:2-3

<sup>315</sup> Matthew 25:1-13

<sup>316</sup> Matthew 24:4, 2 Timothy 3:13

<sup>317</sup> 2 Peter 2:1-2

<sup>318</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:14-15



Yes, Paul taught that the love of JESUS should “**compel**” or “**constrain**” us towards righteousness and away from evil! As people who have been born again by dying to sin with JESUS<sup>319</sup>, we should now live for Him who died and rose again<sup>320</sup>!

Like soil that appreciates the investments of the farmer, we should bear good fruit. Like servants that value what the Master values, we should live according to the values of our LORD. And like people who have died to sin by responding to the love of JESUS, we should live for Him in righteousness, “**obeying from the heart that form of doctrine to which [we] were delivered.**”<sup>321</sup>

GOD waits with patient endurance for the harvest at the end of the age. And to His fruitful trees, He declares: we should “**not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.**”<sup>322</sup>

Simultaneously, to the unfruitful trees, He warns: “**Repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**”<sup>323</sup>

In the meantime, He tests the hearts of all people by pouring out the riches of His Agápe love upon the earth. Will His sunshine and rain continuously produce good fruit in your heart? Or will you despise the riches of His love, and choose to disobey His Word? He patiently waits for the harvest, giving every soul a chance!

JESUS taught about His great patience, when He said: “**A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ‘And if it bears fruit, good. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’**”<sup>324</sup>

Soon the owner of the vineyard will return, and He will be looking for good fruit on His trees! For now, He loosens the soil, He fertilizes the ground, He sends sunlight, and He supplies rain. But the time is coming when all of the fruitless trees will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

But Friends, the owner’s patient investments in the trees in His vineyard should not be confused with “**unconditional love**”. One day, if some of the trees still don’t

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<sup>319</sup> Romans 6:1-3

<sup>320</sup> Romans 6:16-18

<sup>321</sup><sup>321</sup> Romans 6:17,

<sup>322</sup> Galatians 6:9

<sup>323</sup> Acts 26:20

<sup>324</sup> Luke 13:6-9

show any signs of good fruit, the loving investments of the vineyard owner will end for them. And fire will be the eternal destiny of such vegetation.

Likewise, GOD's indescribable agape love (even His love revealed at the cross) can be compared to an investment that is seeking a return! And the precious blood of JESUS can be compared to the life-bringing fertilizer the owner of the vineyard patiently placed around the fruitless fig tree.

Therefore, His saints do not **“despise the riches of GOD’s goodness”**! No, we **“seek for glory, honor, and immortality” “by patient continuance in doing good”**!<sup>325</sup>

Meanwhile, we always remember: it was GOD's agápe love that drew us to Him and brought life to our dead souls<sup>326</sup>! Therefore, it is GOD who deserves all the glory for whatever good fruit we bear! Yes, without JESUS, we can do nothing<sup>327</sup>! And this is what the Scriptures teach, when we look to all of the Bible, and the Bible alone!

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<sup>325</sup> Romans 2:4-11

<sup>326</sup> 1 John 4:19

<sup>327</sup> John 15:5

## Chapter 5: The Creator, The Covenant, and The Conditional Clauses

Please imagine a circle, and label that circle “**the betrothal**”. Then, please note, this circle represents all that we have learned from Scripture about: how our current relationship with JESUS is like a bride’s *betrothal* to her bridegroom.<sup>328</sup>

Then, please draw a second circle in your mind, and label that circle “**the adoption**”. This circle represents what we have learned from Scripture about how our relationship with GOD the Father is like a betrothed daughter-in-law’s relationship with her father-in-law.<sup>329</sup>

Correspondingly, please remember how we learned that “**the adoption**” will take place at the resurrection, when JESUS returns to marry His beloved bride.<sup>330</sup>

Next, please imagine a third circle, and label it: “**The children of GOD**”. Then please note this circle represents what we have learned together from Scripture about: becoming **children of GOD** through JESUS, GOD’s Son.<sup>331</sup>

Now let’s imagine a fourth circle, and label it: “**The good fruit**”. Then note that this circle represents everything we have learned from Scripture about: the importance of bearing “**good fruit**”<sup>332</sup>. And with this fourth circle now drawn, we can begin to analyze these four circles that represent four important Biblical doctrines, to see where they all intersect.

**The betrothal doctrine** and **the adoption doctrine** presented in the Bible have many important things in common, because it is through **the betrothal** process that we are being **adopted** into the family of GOD! So, we can actually combine these two circles, and call the resulting circle: “**the betrothal and the adoption**”.

Now, with those two concepts combined, we should ask: what do those teachings have in common with what the Bible has to say about “**the children of GOD**”?

Well, since the betrothal process requires both the bride and the bridegroom to remain faithful to one another for the wedding to take place, it is clear that the betrothal relationship is conditional.<sup>333</sup>

Plus, if such a **wedding** were to be called off due to unfaithfulness (or any other reason), that would end the **adoption** process that would have made the

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<sup>328</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2

<sup>329</sup> Exodus 21:9

<sup>330</sup> Romans 8:23

<sup>331</sup> John 1:12

<sup>332</sup> Matthew 7:17-20

<sup>333</sup> Matthew 1:19

bridegroom's father the permanent father-in-law of the bride. Therefore, adoption through marriage is always conditional when it is still in the betrothal stage.<sup>334</sup>

Similarly, the Bible makes it clear that people have to meet certain conditions to become “**children of GOD**”! For example, JESUS said: “**If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God**”.<sup>335</sup>

So, one condition required to be a child of GOD is that a person must love JESUS. And that condition would also apply to **the betrothal/adoption teaching**.

Likewise, to be a child of GOD a person must obediently follow the leading of the HOLY SPIRIT. So, Paul wrote: **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**.<sup>336</sup>

And since the SPIRIT will always lead people into righteousness and holiness, it makes sense that John would explain: **In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother**.<sup>337</sup>

Yes, “**loving JESUS**”, being “**led by the HOLY SPIRIT**”, and “**practicing righteousness**” are some of the conditions every true child of GOD will meet. And we can see that conditionality<sup>338</sup> is one common denominator between the betrothal/adoption doctrine and the children of GOD doctrine.

So, what about **the good fruit doctrine** that JESUS and His Apostles and His Disciples taught about? What common denominator does that teaching have with the others we have discussed?

Well, just as **the betrothal/adoption doctrine** and **the children of GOD doctrine** rely on a person being connected to JESUS, **the good fruit doctrine** requires the same thing.

Yes, JESUS said: “**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**”<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Deuteronomy 20:7

<sup>335</sup> John 8:42

<sup>336</sup> Romans 8:14

<sup>337</sup> 1 John 3:10

<sup>338</sup> The state of being subject to conditions.

<sup>339</sup> John 15:4-5

And of course, **the good fruit doctrine** teaches conditionality just like the other three, because **“every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”**<sup>340</sup>

So, we have looked at four different ways the Bible teaches us to picture our relationship to GOD; and each teaching revealed that there were very clear conditions involved, beginning with a relationship with JESUS.

But after that relationship is established: the bride of CHRIST must be dressed in appropriate wedding garments<sup>341</sup>, the virgins must be ready with oil in their lamps<sup>342</sup>, the children of GOD must be led by the HOLY SPIRIT<sup>343</sup>, they must practice righteousness<sup>344</sup>, and every true disciple of JESUS must bear good fruit<sup>345</sup>.

Likewise, the underdressed attendees will be cast out of the wedding feast<sup>346</sup>, the unready virgins without oil will be locked out of the wedding<sup>347</sup>, the children of the devil are led by **“the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”**<sup>348</sup>, those who practice sin will not inherit GOD's kingdom<sup>349</sup>, and every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire<sup>350</sup>.

JESUS and His Apostles filled the pages of the Bible with examples like these to make sure no one would miss the fact that entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven is conditional<sup>351</sup>. So, we must ask: is GOD really planning on casting people He supposedly “unconditionally loves” into Hell?

Once every last prophecy of the Bible is fulfilled, the fact is: every person will either end up in Hell with the devil and his angels, or they will end up in the kingdom of Heaven with GOD. There are only two final destinations<sup>352</sup>! And it would not be very “unconditionally loving” to send a person to Hell, right?

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<sup>340</sup> Matthew 7:19

<sup>341</sup> Revelation 19:8

<sup>342</sup> Matthew 25:10

<sup>343</sup> Romans 8:14

<sup>344</sup> 1 John 3:10

<sup>345</sup> John 15:8

<sup>346</sup> Matthew 22:11-13

<sup>347</sup> Matthew 25:11-12

<sup>348</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>349</sup> Revelation 21:8

<sup>350</sup> Matthew 7:19-21

<sup>351</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>352</sup> Matthew 13:37-43

With that question swirling in our minds, we will now look at something JESUS said that should permanently dismantle the thoroughly unbiblical concept of GOD's love being: "unconditional".

In the gospel of John, JESUS said to His closest disciples, **"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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."**<sup>353</sup>

The Greek word JESUS used here that is translated as "**abide**", is: "**men'-o**". And Thayer's Greek Lexicon lists the following definitions for this word: "to remain, abide, in reference to place: to sojourn, tarry, not to depart."<sup>354</sup>

The fact is, JESUS used the exact same Greek word when He said to Zacchaeus: **"Make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."**<sup>355</sup>

Likewise, JESUS used the same Greek word when He said to His disciples: **"Remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house."**<sup>356</sup>

If GOD's love is unconditional, why would JESUS tell His closest disciples to "**abide**", "**remain**", or "**stay**" in His love? The fact is: "unconditional love" does not require anyone to "**abide**" in it, because it has no boundaries or conditions!

Also, why would JESUS use a conditional phrase to define how they could "**stay**" in His love? Yes, the Greek word translated "**if**" in John 15:10 is pronounced: "**eh-an'**".

And Strong's Concordance explains this word is "a conditional particle"," often used in connection with other particles to denote indefiniteness or uncertainty".<sup>357</sup> Therefore, the LORD's sentence that begins with the Greek equivalent of the word "**if**", is most certainly a conditional sentence.

About such sentences, Collins Dictionary explains: **"Conditional sentences consist of a main clause and a conditional clause. The conditional clause usually begins with if or unless."**<sup>358</sup>

The conditional clause in the LORD's sentence was: **"If you keep my commandments".** And the main results clause was: **"you will abide in my love".**

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<sup>353</sup> John 15:9-10

<sup>354</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon entry under G3306

<sup>355</sup> Luke 19:5

<sup>356</sup> Luke 10:7

<sup>357</sup> Strong's Concordance entry under G1437

<sup>358</sup> <https://grammar.collinsdictionary.com/us/easy-learning/conditional-clauses>

But when the conditional clause is not met, the main resulting clause would no longer apply. Which, in simple terms, means: **if you don't keep the LORD's commandments, you will not remain in His love.**

Obviously, the LORD's words in John chapter 15 are the reason the book of Jude commands: **"keep yourselves in the love of GOD".**<sup>359</sup>

In these passages, the word **"agápe"** is being used within conditional prepositional phrases along with the Greek equivalent of the English word **"in"**<sup>360</sup>. And people are being commanded to stay **"in"** GOD's love like a parent might instruct a child to **"stay" "in"** the yard.

We have discovered how Scripture reveals that GOD has poured out His agape love on the world like an investment to lead people to repentance and redemption through His Son.

And we have also witnessed how a metaphorical "harvest" is coming, when those who have not responded to GOD's love with fruits consistent with repentance will face His wrath and indignation.

So, the overall picture that Scripture is conveying is: GOD's love has boundaries; and His commandments very precisely define those boundaries.

But GOD has offered His love to the world, and He even sent His Son to lay down His life so we could be forgiven for breaking His commandments. And that gracious forgiveness allows us to enter into His saving love.

We can only receive GOD's forgiveness by faith in the redemptive power of the blood of JESUS. And we demonstrate that we believe the teachings of JESUS by repenting of our sins, and symbolically dying to sin in baptism.

But once we enter into a saving relationship with JESUS by faith and repentance, we must remain in JESUS (and His love) by keeping His commandments!

That is why John explained: **By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**<sup>361</sup>

Plus, John also wrote: **Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.**<sup>362</sup>

The whole world is drowning in sin, but GOD so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son to die, so He could redeem us from our sins. If we will take hold

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<sup>359</sup> Jude 1:21

<sup>360</sup> Strong's Number G1722: "en" – in

<sup>361</sup> 1 John 2:5-6

<sup>362</sup> 1 John 3:24a

of GOD's offer of love and forgiveness, JESUS will pluck us out of the deadly waters of sin and lift us up onto His wonderful ship of salvation.

Then, if we sin and break His commandments, we land right back in the waters of sin; because His commandments are the railing on the ship of salvation.

This is why JESUS told the man who asked Him, "what must I do to inherit eternal life"<sup>363</sup>: **"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."**<sup>364</sup>

However, none of us can keep the commandments perfectly, without ever sinning! So, JESUS became our sacrificial Lamb! And when we fall back into the deadly sea of sin, if we truly repent and confess our sin to Him, He will rescue us and cleanse us from the guilt of our sin, so we can once again live on His ship of salvation.<sup>365</sup>

We cannot be "wet" on the ship of salvation, any more than we can be "dry" in the waters of sin!<sup>366</sup> But with the LORD's strength, we can spend less and less time in the murky, deadly water; and more and more time inside the safe boundaries of His protective commandments!

Also, no one can come aboard the ship of salvation if they have not first had their sins purged away by the blood of JESUS; because, the MESSIAH's cross is the only way to come aboard salvation's vessel.<sup>367</sup>

But once we are on-board, the HOLY SPIRIT can give us the strength to keep the righteous requirements of GOD's Law, and bear fruit worthy of repentance!<sup>368</sup>

Meanwhile, if anyone intentionally decides to take a swim in the waters of sin after they have come to fully understand the truth of GOD's Word, Scripture warns: **If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the**

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<sup>363</sup> Mark 10:17

<sup>364</sup> Matthew 19:17

<sup>365</sup> 1 John 1:9

<sup>366</sup> Whoever [is abiding] in Him does not sin. Whoever [keeps on sinning] has neither seen Him nor known Him. 1 John 3:6 (verb tenses modified to match the original Greek)

<sup>367</sup> Acts 4:12

<sup>368</sup> He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:3b-4



**covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?**<sup>369</sup>

Sin is what crucified the LORD of glory, and we must never treat sin or the blood of our LORD lightly! No, we must turn from sin, despise sin, and earnestly desire never to fall into sin again! And in this way, we will treasure the blood of our LORD!

Therefore, JESUS taught: **“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”**<sup>370</sup>

Brothers and Sisters, the cross of JESUS did not abolish the Law of GOD, it re-established it!<sup>371</sup> And because sin is the transgression of the law<sup>372</sup>, we must radically turn away from all sin! Our King stated clearly: not one letter of the law will pass away, as long as the heavens and Earth still stand!

Yes, JESUS taught: **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy it but to [fill]<sup>373</sup> it. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all [comes to pass]<sup>374</sup>. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”**<sup>375</sup>

Then JESUS went on to teach about the commandments that forbid murder, adultery, and vengeance! Plus, He taught about the commandment to love our neighbors, including our enemies! Yes, the “sermon on the mount” was literally: the Creator<sup>376</sup> teaching His people His own Laws in person!

But this time His people were not cowering at the foot of Mount Sinai while He thundered from on top of the mountain in fire and lightning! No, this time, He sat

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<sup>369</sup> Hebrews 10:26-29

<sup>370</sup> Matthew 5:29-30

<sup>371</sup> Romans 3:31

<sup>372</sup> 1 John 3:4 KJV

<sup>373</sup> Strong's Number G4137: play-ro'-o - to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full (As seen in: Romans 15:13-14, Matthew 13:48, Matthew 23:32, John 15:11, etc.)

<sup>374</sup> Strong's Number G1096: ghin'-om-ahee - to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being, to become, i.e. to come to pass, happen, of events, to arise, appear in history, come upon the stage (As seen in: “come” in Matthew 6:10, “let it be done” in Matthew 8:13, “is made” in Matthew 9:16, “let it be” in Matthew 9:29, etc.)

<sup>375</sup> Matthew 5:17-19

<sup>376</sup> Colossians 1:15-18

with them and explained His commandments to them; after demonstrating in the flesh exactly what keeping His commandments should look like!

And this brings us to one of the most important words there is in the entire Bible, and that word is: “**Covenant**”!

In Greek, the word we translate into English as “**covenant**” is: “**dee-ath-ay'-kay**”. And Thayer's defines this word as meaning: “a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid, the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will, a compact, a covenant, a testament.”<sup>377</sup>

Likewise, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines “**dee-ath-ay'-kay**” by writing: “properly a disposition, that is, (specifically) a contract (especially a devisory will):—covenant, testament.”<sup>378</sup>

Both of these respected sources gave a few different definitions of the word “**dee-ath-ay'-kay**”, so we need to look to Scripture to understand this word's meaning accurately.

But before we do that, we should note: sometimes, this word is translated in English Bible's as “**covenant**”, but other times (for no justifiable reason) it is translated as “**testament**”. Meanwhile, in the language of Greek, the same word was used in the inspired Scriptures.

So please remember, any English translation with a reference to a “**testament**” should actually contain the word “**covenant**”. And, while there most certainly are two soteriological<sup>379</sup> covenants revealed in Scripture that can rightly be called: “**the old covenant**” and “**the new covenant**”; the Bible itself should never be compartmentalized and interpreted based on an arbitrary piece of un-inspired paper wrongly inserted between Malachi and Matthew!

The Apostles and Disciples who wrote the books between Matthew and Revelation displayed great solemn reverence for the books many now call “the Old Testament”! But they called them: “**the Holy Scriptures**”<sup>380</sup>.

So, Christians would do well to think of the books that come before Matthew in their English Bible translations with the same reverence the Apostles showed towards them! And we should consider those books as just as authoritative as those holy men of GOD did!

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<sup>377</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon entry for G1242

<sup>378</sup> Strong's Exhaustive Concordance entry for G1242

<sup>379</sup> Related to salvation

<sup>380</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15, Romans 1:2

If JESUS could defeat the temptations of the devil by quoting from Deuteronomy<sup>381</sup>, and if Paul could settle Church disputes with other passages from the Law of Moses<sup>382</sup>, then we would do well to follow such examples!

Truly, **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness!**<sup>383</sup> So, Paul's Bible would never have an uninspired page between Malachi and Matthew!

Now, with that serious issue addressed, we need to consider the two covenants that can actually be called "**the old covenant**" and "**the new covenant**" according to Paul in 2nd Corinthians chapter 3<sup>384</sup>.

In Exodus, Scripture records that GOD said to Moses: "**Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.**"<sup>385</sup>

Then Scripture records: **So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."**<sup>386</sup>

So, after they prepared themselves for three days for the LORD to come speak to them from Mount Sinai. **Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.**<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Matthew 4:4 (Deuteronomy 8:3)

<sup>382</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:8-9 (Deuteronomy 25:4)

<sup>383</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>384</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:14

<sup>385</sup> Exodus 19:3-6

<sup>386</sup> Exodus 19:7-8

<sup>387</sup> Exodus 19:16-19

Then, the Creator announced to all of Israel the words of His Covenant, His Ten Commandments! And those same commandments became the primary cargo of the Ark of the Covenant, the foundation of the Sermon on the Mount, and the heart of the teachings of all of the Apostles of our LORD.

Sometimes Scripture calls the tablets of the Commandments the tablets of the Testimony<sup>388</sup>, and for this reason, the Tabernacle was officially called “the Tabernacle of the Testimony”<sup>389</sup>. But most importantly, the Creator would meet with Moses above the Ark of the Covenant, through the veil of the Holy of Holies.<sup>390</sup>

Thus, in the “**old covenant**” GOD physically met with man through a physical veil. Plus, He established fleshly methods of purification and a fleshly priesthood that perpetually offered fleshly sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. And the words of the “old covenant” were physically written in stone, and kept in a physical ark that only certain fleshly descendants of Arron could safely handle.

But Israel did not obey the words of the Covenant, so GOD promised to institute a new covenant through the prophet Jeremiah.

Therefore, in the book that bears that name, it is written: **“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah– not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**<sup>391</sup>

There is one, very special book of the Bible that repeats this important declaration in more than one of its chapters, while explaining exactly what changed between the “old covenant” and the “new covenant” announced in Jeremiah.

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<sup>388</sup> Exodus 32:15-16

<sup>389</sup> Exodus 38:21

<sup>390</sup> Exodus 25:22

<sup>391</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34

Yes, the Epistle to the Hebrews explains that the earthly tabernacle pointed to a better tabernacle in Heaven, where GOD actually dwells between real, living cherubim.

Hebrews explains that the earthly priesthood pointed towards a better eternal High Priest who sits on the throne in Heaven, after offering Himself for the sins of His people.

And Hebrews explains that the fleshly methods of cleansing **“concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances”** were only **“imposed until the time”**<sup>392</sup> when the MESSIAH **“reformed”** the way we approach GOD’s heavenly throne! But after that great reformation, those fleshly ordinances are no longer required.

However, the book of Hebrews never describes any new commandments being a part of **“the new covenant”**! No, only the priesthood, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the fleshly purifications changed! Meanwhile, in one of Paul’s other epistles we learn there was something that changed about the Ten Commandments.

He wrote: **“Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”**<sup>393</sup>

Why is Paul saying the HOLY SPIRIT wrote something on the hearts of these Christians? And why did he call their hearts **“tablets of flesh”** and compare them to **“tablets of stone”**? The obvious and true answer to those questions is: Paul was referring to the promise of the new covenant!

Yes, the HOLY SPIRIT has written the commandments of the covenant on the hearts and minds of every true disciple of JESUS! No longer is the covenant hidden away in an inaccessible ark behind a veil that cannot be penetrated!

No JESUS tore that veil, and opened the way into the kingdom of Heaven. Then He sent His Spirit to write the constitution of the kingdom on the hearts and minds of all His beloved saints!

Therefore, our Creator proclaimed: **He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”**<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Hebrews 9:10

<sup>393</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:3

<sup>394</sup> John 14:21

The first conditional clause JESUS spoke was: **“He who has the LORD’s commandments and keeps them”**. Then, the resulting clause He attached to that conditional clause was: **“it is him who loves JESUS”**! Thus, those who don’t have His commandments, as well as those who don’t keep them, don’t love JESUS!

So, John later wrote: **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**<sup>395</sup>

But JESUS also included a second conditional clause in this passage when He said: **“he who loves me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”**

After defining what it actually means to **“love JESUS”**, the LORD explained that both He and the Father would love anyone who **“loved Him”**!

This is obviously a conditional love being described, especially since JESUS made it clear that keeping His commandments was the proof that we love Him!

Plus, JESUS promised to make Himself known to anyone who truly loves Him by keeping His commandments. And the way JESUS fulfills this promise is by sending the HOLY SPIRIT.

Yes, He assured His disciples: **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”**<sup>396</sup>

Truly, the HOLY SPIRIT reveals JESUS to us when He comes to dwell inside of us! But this entire holy union is centered around keeping the LORD’s covenant commandments, just as the Tabernacle was focused on the covenant housed in the Ark, within the Holy of Holies!

The Tabernacle of the Testimony was GOD’s portable temple in the first covenant! But now we are GOD’s Temple, and our hearts and minds have become the tablets of His holy Commandments! Therefore, this perfectly fulfills the promise of the new covenant!

And it is the basis of why JESUS said: **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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.”**<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> 1 John 5:3

<sup>396</sup> John 14:15-17

<sup>397</sup> John 15:9-10

Now, with this understood, there is one more thing we need to note about this passage. You don't have to "**abide**" in "unconditional love", because such a hypothetical love has no conditions that have to be met for it to exist or continue.

Or, in other words: unconditional love has no boundaries, no parameters, and no rules! It must love unconditionally, regardless of the actions or inactions of the recipient of such love.

Meanwhile, JESUS made it clear that He Himself kept His Father's commands, so He "**abides**" in His Father's love! This means that even GOD's love for His only begotten Son is not "unconditional"!

And JESUS made this point in another passage by saying: "**Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.**"<sup>398</sup>

Now, the word translated in that passage as "**therefore**", is: "**dee-ah'**". And when this word is used in a sentence like this one, it means: "the ground or reason by which something is or is not done; by reason of, on account of, because of (or) for this reason".

So, the NIV translates this passage: **The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.** The ESV reads: **For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.** The NASB reads: **For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it back.** The Holman Christian Standard Bible reads: **This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again.** And the Literal Standard Version reads: **Because of this the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that again I may take it.**<sup>399</sup>

Friends, JESUS revealed that the Father's love towards Him is not "unconditional"! So how deceived must someone be to think that GOD's love toward them is "unconditional"?

The truth is, "Unconditional Love" is just another lie of satan designed to erase the commandments of GOD from the hearts and minds of Christians everywhere, and lead them to the flames of Hell!

It is a trick, a deception of the devil, created to lead GOD's people away from His covenant! So, I beg you, don't let anyone deceive you! **If you keep the MESSIAH's commandments, you will remain in His love, just as He kept the Father's commandments and remained in His love.**

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<sup>398</sup> John 10:17

<sup>399</sup> <https://www.biblehub.com/john/10-17.htm>

Search the Scriptures and you will find this to be true! But make sure to search all of the Bible and the Bible alone!



## Chapter 6: Love, the Law, and Lasting Consequences

Please allow me to introduce you to Leon. Leon claims to love his wife, but he frequently commits adultery, crushing his wife's heart with his sin, over and over again.

Likewise, Leon claims to love his sister, but he constantly insults her with his words, and slanderously murders her tender soul with his sinfully sharp tongue.

Leon also claims to love his employer, but he has sinfully stolen a wide array of items of varying values from his employer over the years.

And Leon claims to love his neighbors, but he frequently lies to them and about them in a sinful effort to make himself look good in the eyes of others.

Leon is the type of person the Bible calls a **“sinner”**<sup>400</sup> or someone who **“practices lawlessness”**<sup>401</sup>. And the truth is: because of his unrepentant lawlessness, Leon is incapable of loving anyone but himself!

People like Leon were exactly who JESUS had in mind when He warned about the end of the age: **“Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”**<sup>402</sup>

Yes, Scripture repeatedly and obviously ties real Biblical love and GOD's law together as completely inseparable!<sup>403</sup>

Therefore, JESUS said: **“‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”**<sup>404</sup>

Every commandment - everything GOD's holy prophets ever wrote - all of it rests on the foundation of **love**! In fact, love for GOD and our neighbors is carefully defined by the holy standards recorded within GOD's everlasting Law! Therefore, we cannot break any part of GOD's law and still be loving GOD and our neighbor!

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<sup>400</sup> Mark 2:17, Mark 14:41, Luke 6:32-34, Luke 13:2-3

<sup>401</sup> Matthew 7:23, Matthew 13:41, 1 John 3:4

<sup>402</sup> Matthew 24:12-13

<sup>403</sup> James 2:8-9

<sup>404</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

So, John wrote: **This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.**<sup>405</sup>

Likewise, Paul wrote: **Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**<sup>406</sup>

If love is equal to the law and the law is equal to love, what is “unconditional love”? Well, the truth is: unconditional love is unjust, “**lawless**” love!

Consider this: How is GOD loving Leon's wife, sister, employer, and neighbors if He allows Leon to continue sinning against them indefinitely? If one single person like “Leon” gets into the Kingdom of Heaven he will ruin it for everyone who has to deal with him!

Therefore, the justice of GOD demands conditional love, because: “unconditional love” is a permission slip for sin! In fact, “unconditional love” dismisses the rights and freedoms of the righteous, while **conditional love** protects their rights and freedoms! And GOD, the righteous judge, will not allow the rights and freedoms of His servants to be trampled on forever!

So, Paul wrote: **It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.**<sup>407</sup>

And JESUS, the righteous Judge, has warned: **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him: the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should**

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<sup>405</sup> 2 John 1:6

<sup>406</sup> Romans 13:8-10

<sup>407</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

**speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”<sup>408</sup>**

Consequently, Christian teachers are subtly attacking GOD's Law and His justice when they say things like: *“God's love is unconditional. Unlike earthly affection, His love doesn't fluctuate. The Father doesn't care for us more when we have pleased Him or less when we have failed or sinned.”<sup>409</sup>*

As we have already learned, JESUS directly disagreed with that statement!<sup>410</sup> Instead, our LORD said: **“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.”<sup>411</sup>**

But when respected men like Charles Stanley teach such things, it is no surprise when the children of those teachers write the following: *“Participants in the new covenant are not required to obey any of the commandments found in the first part of their Bibles.”<sup>412</sup>*

Yes, the son of Charles Stanley, named Andy Stanley, teaches none of GOD's commandments have to be obeyed by Christians in the new covenant! He claims: JESUS “replaced” the Ten Commandments with a single commandment to “love one another” as He loved us.<sup>413</sup>

But JESUS Himself taught us that love is defined by His Commandments, so how can we properly define “loving one another” if we throw out GOD's commandments?

Also, if Christians are not required to obey GOD's commandments, why does Paul write: **Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**<sup>414</sup>

Adulterers are people who break the seventh commandment! Idolaters are people who break the second commandment. And Murderers are people who

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<sup>408</sup> John 12:48-50

<sup>409</sup> <https://www.intouch.org/read/bible-study-gods-unconditional-love>

<sup>410</sup> John 14:21

<sup>411</sup> John 15:10

<sup>412</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/andy-stanley-says-ten-commandments-dont-apply-to-christians.html>

<sup>413</sup> <https://www.relevantmagazine.com/faith/why-do-christians-want-to-post-the-10-commandments-and-not-the-sermon-on-the-mount/>

<sup>414</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

break the sixth commandment. But none of these commandment breakers will inherit GOD's kingdom according to the Holy Bible!

So, Scripture declares: **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**<sup>415</sup>

Meanwhile, the definition of the word "**love**" has been twisted in the Church just as it has been twisted in the culture! And a generation of teachers represented by men like Charles Stanley have redefined GOD's love and claimed it is "unconditional".

Then, that unbiblical lie led many within the following generation of teachers towards full-blown lawless rebellion against the Commandments of the Creator! Yes, the generation that is represented by teachers like Andy Stanley followed the teaching of "unconditional love" to its natural conclusion, which is full-blown "**lawlessness**". And this "lawlessness" is characterized by redefining love with standards found outside of GOD's law.

The blindness that led to this lawlessness began when certain teachers failed to see that GOD's love is like the care a vinedresser shows to his vines. But if those vines don't produce good fruit by the time of the harvest, they will be cut off and thrown into the fire!<sup>416</sup>

Similarly, the lawless teachers fail to see that the Church's marriage to JESUS has not yet taken place, and each virgin must keep herself ready and her lamp full of oil if she is to be part of the MESSIAH's wedding!<sup>417</sup>

Plus, they fail to see that we become GOD's children by marrying His "**only begotten Son**". But if we are not faithful to Him in the betrothal period, we will not experience "the adoption" that is finalized by "the wedding"!<sup>418</sup>

So, despite the erroneous claims of Charles and Andy Stanley, the fact is: all 10 of the Ten Commandments are mentioned and reinforced in the Apostolic Scriptures.

If you search from Matthew to Revelation, you can see that each and every commandment is reinforced and restated, including the Sabbath commandment.

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<sup>415</sup> Revelation 22:14

<sup>416</sup> John 15:1-6

<sup>417</sup> Matthew 25:6-10

<sup>418</sup> Revelation 2:10

So, it makes perfect sense that the last chapter of the last book of the Bible declares: **Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**<sup>419</sup>

And it makes perfect sense that the prophets described exactly how the Sabbath will be kept on the seventh day of each week after JESUS returns to rule over the entire earth!<sup>420</sup>

But the natural conclusion of the false teaching that claims “GOD’s love is unconditional” is: GOD’s love no longer depends on His people keeping His commandments, and no one should have to **“keep His commandments to abide in His love”**<sup>421</sup>!

Those who fail to see that Jeremiah 31’s description of **“the new covenant”** only changes the location where GOD’s law is written, wrongly think the Ten Commandments are no longer part of GOD’s **“new covenant”**.

However, those who read the Bible more carefully understand: **Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**<sup>422</sup>

Christians who understand that the 10 Commandments are eternal: **“...Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep<sup>423</sup> all things that [JESUS] commanded.”**<sup>424</sup>

And JESUS promised: because they **“...Do and teach the commandments, [they] shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”**<sup>425</sup>

But JESUS warned: anyone who **“loosens”<sup>426</sup> “one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”**<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Revelation 22:14

<sup>420</sup> Ezekiel 46:1, Isaiah 66:23

<sup>421</sup> John 15:10

<sup>422</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:19

<sup>423</sup> G5083 - tay-reh'-o: to attend to carefully, take care of, to guard, to keep (See: Matthew 19:17, Mark 7:9, John 8:51, John 8:55, John 14:15, John 14:21, John 14:23, John 15:10, 1 John 2:3-5, 1 John 3:22, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 5:2-3, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12, etc.)

<sup>424</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>425</sup> Matthew 5:19b

<sup>426</sup> G3089: loo'-o = to loosen (See: Matthew 21:2, Mark 1:7, Mark 7:35, Mark 11:2, Mark 11:4, Mark 11:5, etc.)

<sup>427</sup> Matthew 5:19a

Yes, before teaching about several of His Ten Commandments, and raising the bar on murder and adultery, JESUS warned that anyone who even “**loosened**” one of His Commandments would face certain consequences!

Now, an example of how to “**loosen**” a commandment would be: someone might wrongly teach that people are supposedly *allowed* to commit adultery in their hearts by looking at others to lust after them, they just cannot physically commit literal adultery with that other person. But JESUS clearly explained both of those sins violate His commandment against adultery!

Or someone might wrongfully teach that people are supposedly permitted to tear down others with reviling insults, as long as they don’t actually murder them in a physical way. But JESUS clearly explained that both of those sins violate His commandment against murder.

Yes, as the MESSIAH explained: His commandments prohibit committing adultery in the heart, and murdering with the tongue! And anyone who wants to be called “great” in His Kingdom must turn away from such sins, and teach others to do so as well!

Meanwhile, those who wrongly teach people that they can get away with minor infractions against GOD’s Covenant Commandments as long as they don’t blatantly transgress His Law (even regarding “**the least**” of the 10 Commandments) will be called “**least**” in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Yes, how we currently interact with GOD’s covenant Commandments determines how we will be known in His Kingdom for eternity! So, please don’t listen to those who try to dismiss or dismantle the Creator’s Covenant! According to the Bible: they will not experience His glorious Kingdom; and they certainly have no idea what they are talking about!

As Peter warned: **Untaught and unstable people twist [Paul’s epistles] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.**<sup>428</sup>

Now, the word Peter used, that is translated as “**wicked**” in that passage is: **ath'-es-mos**. And Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines that word as: “one who breaks through the restraint of the law and gratifies his lusts”. So, Peter warned us to avoid the “**error**” of those who break through the restraint of GOD’s law, because that error leads to “**destruction**”!

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<sup>428</sup> 2 Peter 3:16-17

You see, the Covenant still consists of the 10 Commandments even though it is written on new, fleshly tablets in our hearts and minds! And just as the children of Israel were sprinkled with blood at the inauguration of the old covenant<sup>429</sup>, every disciple of the MESSIAH has been sprinkled with His blood that was shed at the inauguration of the new covenant<sup>430</sup>!

However, just as the blood and the Commandments of the Covenant were permanently united together as the foundation of the old covenant; the blood of our LORD and the Commandments of His Covenant are permanently united together as the foundation of the new covenant!

Moses sprinkled the people with blood to purify them, and prepare them to enter covenant with GOD as a foreshadowing of how JESUS sprinkles us with His own blood to purify us so we can enter covenant with GOD!<sup>431</sup>

JESUS did not command His Apostles to go and baptize people, and teach them merely to believe certain facts about Him! No, JESUS commanded them to make disciples who keep all He has commanded<sup>432</sup>, and His commandments are His Covenant!

Truly, no one can understand the new covenant until they carefully study the old covenant! Thus, the “**untaught**” people Peter warned us about, disconnect the old covenant from the new covenant; and tragically miss the many ways GOD perfectly foreshadowed our salvation through JESUS within all Moses recorded!

They somehow think the old covenant was a mistake, and later GOD changed His plan! But our GOD doesn't make mistakes! His plan was perfect! In fact, every detail in the old covenant perfectly reveals some spiritual reality we must understand to grow and thrive in JESUS! And this leads us to the very first mention of GOD's love in the Bible!

In Deuteronomy, Moses declared: “**Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you. On earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power.**”<sup>433</sup>

Was GOD's love for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “unconditional”? Was His love for the nation of Israel “unconditional”?

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<sup>429</sup> Exodus 24:6-8

<sup>430</sup> ...having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience... Hebrews 10:22

<sup>431</sup> Hebrews 9:18-23

<sup>432</sup>

<sup>433</sup> Deuteronomy 4:35-37

Well, to Isaac, the LORD said: **“Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”**<sup>434</sup>

Yes, GOD set His amazing love on Abraham because He foreknew Abraham would obey His voice and keep his charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws. Then GOD told Isaac to remain in the promised land if he wanted to inherit all of the promises GOD announced to his father.

After that, to Jacob the LORD said: **“Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.”**<sup>435</sup> So, Scripture reports: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all obeyed the LORD when He instructed them to live in the promised land by faith.

And Hebrews summarizes this by saying: **By faith [Abraham] dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.**<sup>436</sup> And these men who obeyed the voice of the LORD became known as “the fathers” of the faith!

Plus, because those three men heeded the LORD’s command, the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rescued Jacob’s children from slavery in Egypt, and brought them to His mountain to enter into covenant with the entire nation!

So, Moses explained: **“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.”**<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Genesis 26:2-5

<sup>435</sup> Genesis 31:3

<sup>436</sup> Hebrews 11:9

<sup>437</sup> Deuteronomy 7:9-13



Basically, Moses said: if you keep the covenant commandments of GOD, you will remain in GOD's love, just as your fathers kept the covenant commandments of GOD and remained in His love. And the history of the children of Israel reveals: that is exactly what happened!

When they kept the covenant commandments of GOD, the LORD blessed them, protected them, and prospered them. Thus, everyone could see that He poured out His glorious love on them during their times of obedience.

But when they violated the covenant commandments of GOD, the LORD warned them, punished them, and eventually gave them a certificate of divorce!<sup>438</sup>

And Jeremiah records some of what they faced for violating the covenant commandments, by recounting: **“The hands of merciful women have boiled their own children, they have been for food to them.”**<sup>439</sup> GOD repaid that generation that hated Him to their face, and they knew their sin was the cause of the punishment.

Yes, just as Proverbs warns: **“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”**<sup>440</sup> And this is still true today!

Likewise, Proverbs also explains: **The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves him who follows righteousness.**<sup>441</sup> GOD is patient and longsuffering with the wicked, but the fullness of the riches of His love are reserved for the righteous!

And the Psalms declare: **You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.**<sup>442</sup> One day, when the LORD returns to the earth to rule from Zion, He will destroy all the workers of lawlessness.

And Paul tells us that these verses are still profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness! So, how can GOD **“hate all workers of iniquity”** and unconditionally love at the same time? Obviously either this Psalm is wrong, or Charles Stanley is gravely mistaken!

But, just so no one can falsely claim: **“after GOD enters a covenant with someone, He will never “hate” them ever again for their sin”**, we need to note

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<sup>438</sup> Jeremiah 3:8

<sup>439</sup> Lamentations 4:10

<sup>440</sup> Proverbs 28:9

<sup>441</sup> Proverbs 15:9

<sup>442</sup> Psalms 5:4-5

that the following passage was written about Israel after they entered into covenant with the LORD.

Through His prophet, GOD said about Israel: **“All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds, I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more. All their princes are rebellious.”**<sup>443</sup>

In in another place, it is written: **Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them.**<sup>444</sup>

Words like **“abhorred”** and **“hated”** are the opposite of **“love”**! And many passages of the Bible teach that GOD eventually withdraws His love from those individuals who persist in sin! So, this leads us to the topic of Hell.

But before we consider the reality of Hell, we should probably understand the slight variations that might exist among those who incorrectly teach that “GOD loves unconditionally”.

First, the heresy of universalism (which claims that all people will eventually be saved from Hell) teaches that GOD loves all people unconditionally and universally.

But Scripture clearly debunks that perspective with passages like this one in Romans 9, that asks: **What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?**<sup>445</sup>

And in Proverbs, Scripture explains: **The LORD has made all for Himself. Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD. Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.**<sup>446</sup>

So, GOD created certain people knowing ahead of time that they would freely choose to reject His Covenant! But He allowed them that freedom, just so His power and wrath could be demonstrated. Therefore, we can easily dismiss

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<sup>443</sup> Hosea 9:15

<sup>444</sup> Psalms 106:39-41

<sup>445</sup> Romans 9:22-24

<sup>446</sup> Proverbs 16:4-5

universalism, and move on to the next heresy that teaches: "GOD loves unconditionally".

This heresy, which we will call: "**easy-believism**", claims that GOD will save all people who believe certain facts about JESUS; facts that even the demons believe, according to James<sup>447</sup>.

Meanwhile, those who teach "**easy-believism**" would say: "Once you believe in JESUS you become a permanent part of the family of GOD, and nothing you can do can separate you from GOD's love".

So, this perspective of GOD's love might be labeled "**almost-unconditional love**", because this perspective believes that faith is required to become a recipient of GOD's love! However, they claim: "Once faith is expressed, GOD's love will never be taken away for any type of sin, wickedness, iniquity, or lawlessness".

Now, a good place to begin evaluating the false-teaching of "**almost unconditional love**" is with the case of Ananias and Saphira.

In Acts chapter 5, Luke records that this married couple sold a piece of land, and brought only a part of the proceeds to lay at the feet of the Apostles. But they did so while pretending that they were giving all of the proceeds as an offering to the Church.

So, when the husband Ananias laid the money down, Peter asked him: "**Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.**"<sup>448</sup>

Clearly Ananias believed in JESUS or he would not have sold this property or donated any part of the proceeds to the Church. Also, if he had not been baptized, the Church would not have welcomed him or his wife as disciples of JESUS.

So, his presence in the congregation and his willingness to make an offering in obedience to the teachings of JESUS demonstrated a certain type of faith in the LORD. But he must have believed he could practice the sin of lying without consequences.

Meanwhile, because deception was still a part of his demonstration of faith, Luke records: **Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So**

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<sup>447</sup> James 2:19-24

<sup>448</sup> Acts 5:3-4

**great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.**<sup>449</sup>

Then Luke immediately went on to record: **Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.**<sup>450</sup>

Why did Ananias and Saphira face GOD's judgment if they were unconditionally loved? Why did **“great fear come upon all of the church”**? Obviously, these events proved the conditionality of GOD's love! Yes, they demonstrated that GOD's justice would not tolerate such violations of His commandments, even in the new covenant!

And to anyone who might assert that Ananias and Saphira died in judgment but still went to heaven, we should point out: such a claim would contradict Scripture! Because, it is written: **“... all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**<sup>451</sup>

Please consider: Why did JESUS rebuke several churches in Revelation and threaten to remove their lampstands, vomit them out of His mouth, fight against them with the sword of His mouth, or kill some of them if He unconditionally loved them? Obviously, these statements of JESUS likewise prove the conditionality of GOD's love, even for believers!

Truly, all forms of “unconditional love” are unbiblical because they undermine the justice of GOD! So, while GOD's love is amazingly patient, undeservedly generous, and indescribably glorious; we must abide in it by keeping His commandments!

For this reason, James rebuked certain Christians by writing: **Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Acts 5:5-6

<sup>450</sup> Acts 5:7-11

<sup>451</sup> Revelation 21:8

<sup>452</sup> James 4:4

Someone cannot be an “**adulterer or an adulteress**” unless they are in a marriage covenant like the one all betrothed people enter! So, James was warning Christians: GOD becomes the enemy of anyone who pursues intimate fellowship with the world, because it is a form of adultery against JESUS!

And JESUS cautioned: “**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**”<sup>453</sup>

The GOD of the Bible is not blind! He is perfectly just, and “**He hates all workers of iniquity**”! So, those who truly know His Word, listen to the declaration of David (that the Apostle Peter repeated)! And that declaration states: **The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.**<sup>454</sup>

If this were not true, then GOD would not be just! But He **is** always perfectly just; so, while He offers all people everywhere the opportunity to repent and be saved through the blood of His Son, He will judge the wicked for their sin if they don't repent before Judgment Day!

Now the place where GOD will send all those who refuse to keep His covenant founded on the blood of His Son is called “Hell”. And, about this terrible, unimaginable place of pain and torment, JESUS said: “**If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where ‘Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’**”<sup>455</sup>

JESUS is clear that **sin** is what sends people to hell! And those who truly believe in Him, turn from **sin** so intently that they would rather lose a body part than continue in **sin**!

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<sup>453</sup> Matthew 13:47-50

<sup>454</sup> Psalms 34:15-16 & 1 Peter 3:12

<sup>455</sup> Mark 9:43-48

But the false doctrine of “unconditional love” not only erases the Commandments of GOD from the hearts of those who believe such a lie; it also minimizes the fear of the LORD in their minds.

Therefore, the MESSIAH warned: **“I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”**<sup>456</sup>

Friends, we are commanded to fear GOD and keep His commandments! But false teachers have secretly crept in with deceptive doctrines, teaching GOD's people unbiblical concepts that lead them away from sound, righteous, Biblical thinking.

So, with Paul, I beg you: **Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.**<sup>457</sup>

The concept of unconditional love is a philosophical construct that denies the justice of GOD, the testimony of the Scriptures, and the reality of Hell! Therefore, believing such a dangerous deception will lead to devastating, eternal consequences! And this is what the SPIRIT is saying to the churches, when we look to all of the Bible and the Bible alone.

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<sup>456</sup> Luke 12:5

<sup>457</sup> Colossians 2:8