

Come and Reason Ministries
Let's Talk September 24, 2011

Difficult Questions and Biblical Answers

- I. In a short paragraph or two can you tell us what the main message of your Sabbath School class is?

We believe that the battle between Christ and Satan is a battle of ideas, methods, motives and principles that is waged in the minds, hearts and characters of intelligent beings, centering on the trustworthiness of God.

We believe God is love, and love is a principle of giving and beneficence originating in the character of God, and upon which He constructed the universe to operate.

We believe that humanity no longer naturally operates in harmony with God's design of love, and instead is infected with selfishness, and this condition is incompatible with life as God designed it to exist.

We believe that God, sent Jesus Christ, as His agent to destroy Satan and his power by providing the truth about God, to destroy selfishness within humanity, and to restore God's design principle of love into the species human thus procuring the remedy to our terminal condition.

We believe this remedy is a perfected humanity restored to God's original design achieved in the person of Jesus Christ, and is available as a free gift to all who trust in God.

Come and Reason Ministries' mission is to make God's methods and principles practical, understandable, and applicable to people's lives here and now. We are dedicated to help people learn to discern, to teach individuals how to think for themselves, to hone and refine their reasoning powers in order to increase their ability to know

right from wrong and healthy from unhealthy. Come and Reason Ministries is devoted to working with God to help bring truth, love, and healing to all who are seeking to know and understand their Creator. We accept the Bible as authoritative and believe, rightly understood, that Scripture and Science harmonize perfectly. To that end we actively seek to present an integrated understanding of nature and Scripture for the purpose of helping people develop their full potential and experience healing of mind, character, and relationships.

- II. As I read through the Bible, there are many texts that support the conventional popular [penal] substitutionary Christian model of salvation. They seem very clear to me. When I look at the evidence from the Bible for the trust/healing model that you speak of, it seems like obscure, read-between-the-lines kind of evidence. Why shouldn't I go with the clear evidence over the evidence written in code that requires lots of explaining to extract the meaning? If I'm to determine the preponderance of evidence, it seems like the sheer number of clearly written texts are in favor of the substitutionary model.
- What are those texts? Can you share with me the texts you believe suggest penal substitution?
 - Are the texts clearly penal substitution, or have we been biased by lifelong indoctrination to see it that way? Does perspective change what is obvious? See slides...
 - We believe in substitution, the question is substitution for what? Our model is called Healing Substitution.
 - This question has to do with the solution for the sin problem, but before we can understand the solution, we must accurately understand the problem the solution is designed to fix. So, what is the problem sin caused the plan of salvation is designed to fix?
 - What caused the sin problem? What is the central

core, initial, defect that initiated sin – deviations from God’s law of love?

Sin is Lawlessness, the question is, what law is it a deviation of? Is the law of God:

- Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.** Romans 13:10
- The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: “**Love** your neighbor as yourself.” Galatians 5:14
- If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, “**Love** your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. James 2:8
- Jesus replied: “**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” Matt 22:37-40
- In the **way of righteousness there is life**; along that path is immortality. Pr 12:28
- He who pursues **righteousness and love finds life**, prosperity and honor. Pr 21:21
- The **law** of the Lord is perfect, **reviving** the soul. Ps 19:7
- In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. **For God is love, and love is life.** COL 258
- Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with **the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.** GC 493
- **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God**, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. GC 493

- **The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man.** "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: "Thy law is the truth"; "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:142, 172). And the apostle Paul declares: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). **Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.** {RC 46.5}
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.** DA 21
- As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. **There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind.** But while

everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of his creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and **a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good**; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent. {ST, April 15, 1886 par. 2}

So is God's Law:

1. A legal enactment by the Creator of the universe. An imposed set of rules to which created beings are required to adhere, upon threat of an imposed penalty by the Creator of the law.
2. A principle, emanating from the Creator, upon which life is designed to operate or function. Deviations are inherently incompatible with life as the Creator designed it.

It is from these two diverging ideas of God's law that two separate views of sin have emerged and, subsequently, two very different ways of resolving the sin problem have been taught.

The Little Horn of Daniel 7, changed the concept of God's law from the principle upon which God created life to operate, to an imposed law to which creatures must adhere. And this little horn power created a subsequent "Christian" belief system based on this imposed law with imposed penalties and need for legal payment, i.e. penal substitution.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, **sin is lawlessness.** 1John 3:4

You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone **who looks at a woman lustfully** has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matt 5:27,28

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and **the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.** Matt 12:34,35

Anyone, then, who **knows the good** he ought to do and **doesn't do it, sins.** James 4:17

I see **another law at work in the members of my body,** waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. Romans 7:23

The **sinful mind** is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, **nor can it do so.** Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. Romans 8:7,8

Eve believed the words of Satan, and the **belief of that falsehood in regard to God's character, changed the condition and character of both herself and husband.** They were changed from good and obedient children into transgressors... RH, January 5, 1886 par. 8

All sin is selfishness. Satan's first sin was a manifestation of selfishness. He sought to grasp power, to exalt self. A species of insanity led him to seek to supersede God. And the temptation that led Adam to sin was Satan's declaration that it was possible for man to attain to something more than he already enjoyed, possible for him to be as God Himself. **The sowing of seeds of selfishness in the human heart was the first result of the entrance of sin into the world.** God desires every one to understand the evil of selfishness, and to co operate with Him in guarding the human family against its terrible, deceptive

powers. The design of the gospel is to confront this evil by means of remedial missionary work, and to destroy its destructive power by establishing enterprises of benevolence. {WB, September 9, 1902 par. 3}

Our only definition of sin is that given in the Word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a ***principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.*** {GC88 492.2}

But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.** DA 21

In heaven itself **this law was broken [Law of love]. Sin originated in self-seeking.** Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore **he misrepresented God**, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. **Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men.** DA 21

As the foundation principle of all education in these lines, the youth should be taught that the **laws of nature are the laws of God-- as truly divine as are the precepts of the Decalogue.** The laws that govern our physical organism,

God has written upon every nerve, muscle, and fiber of the body. **Every careless and willful violation of these laws is a sin against our Creator.** How necessary, then, that a thorough knowledge of these laws should be imparted! {CG 363.1}

God's law is written by His own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every faculty which has been entrusted to man. These gifts were bestowed upon him, not to be abused, corrupted and abased, but to be used to His honor and glory. **Every misuse of any part of our organism is a violation of the law which God designs shall govern us in these matters, and by violating this law human beings corrupt themselves;** sickness and disease of every kind, ruined constitutions, premature decay, untimely deaths, these are the results of a violation of nature's laws. {SpM 40.6}

Because sin is a “principle” and not merely a behavior, legal pardon does nothing to resolve the sin problem. Sin is resolved only by destroying the principle of selfishness from the heart and restoring God’s law of love back into the intelligent being.

Example, a person who has a plastic bag tied over his head, and therefore is in violation of the law of respiration, is not benefited by a legal pardon. Such a person is only benefited by being put back in harmony with the law that life is constructed to operate upon – removing the plastic bag.

Because of Adam’s sin, the human species is defective, wired for “survival-of-the-fittest” with fear and selfishness as the governing force in us. This condition is out of harmony with God’s design and without remedy is incompatible with life eternal.

So another question submitted, hones in on the issue:

- a. In what way is Jesus our divine Substitute?

- Our model is called The Healing Substitution Model – we don't dispute Christ came as our "Substitute" what we dispute is the historic view of legal payment?
- Was substitution for legal purposes or for something else?
- **Healing Substitution Model:** Christ is our substitute. He became human and took sinful mankind's position. He took our terminal condition upon Himself. He "became sin who knew no sin," in order to cure mankind from sinfulness. Though sinless, Christ died when He experienced the sense of darkness of God-forsakenness, crying "Why have you forsaken me?" At the cross, He experienced the consequences of sin much like unhealable sinners will in the end. In Christ's human brain, love overcame the temptation to save self (selfishness), thereby, destroying the carnal nature, perfectly restoring God's law of love back into the human species, thus restoring unity between the human species and God.
- **Documentation for the Healing Substitution Model:**
- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2Corinthians 5:21
- He himself **bore our sin in his body on the tree**, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; **by his wounds you have been healed.** 1Peter 2:24
- Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet **we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.** Isa 53:4
 - Jesus took our condition, infirmity and sinfulness upon Himself when He became incarnate. He was born of a woman under law, (Galatians 4:4), but His Father was the Holy Spirit. Thus in Christ Jesus we have a human being who is subject to like passions and can experience temptation like each of us, but who had the law of love perfectly operating in His brain.

- For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who **has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.** Heb 4:15
- When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but **each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.** James 1:13,14
 - Christ was tempted in every way just like us and we are tempted by our own evil desires. While Christ never sinned, he experienced the temptation the fallen nature causes. In Gethsemane He experienced powerful human emotions to “save self.”
- He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, **take this cup from me;** yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. **And being in anguish,** he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:41-44
 - Yet every time the human emotions tempted Him, He chose to surrender self and give self in love. Thus in Christ’s human brain, (divinity cannot be tempted see James 1 above) God’s law of love destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness!
- **At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face.** Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown. {DA 57.2}
- To the heart of Christ it was a bitter task to press His way against the fears, disappointment, and unbelief of His beloved disciples. It was hard to lead them forward to

the anguish and despair that awaited them at Jerusalem. And Satan was at hand to press his temptations upon the Son of man. Why should He now go to Jerusalem, to certain death? All around Him were souls hungering for the bread of life. On every hand were suffering ones waiting for His word of healing. The work to be wrought by the gospel of His grace was but just begun. And He was full of the vigor of manhood's prime. Why not go forward to the vast fields of the world with the words of His grace, the touch of His healing power? Why not take to Himself the joy of giving light and gladness to those darkened and sorrowing millions? Why leave the harvest gathering to His disciples, so weak in faith, so dull of understanding, so slow to act? Why face death now, and leave the work in its infancy? The foe who in the wilderness had confronted Christ assailed Him now with fierce and subtle temptations. **Had Jesus yielded for a moment, had He changed His course in the least particular to save Himself, Satan's agencies would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost.** {DA 486.1}

- I will try to answer this important question: **As God He could not be tempted: but as a man He could be tempted**, and that strongly, and could yield to the temptations. His human nature must pass through the same test and trial Adam and Eve passed through. His human nature was created; it did not even possess the angelic powers. **It was human, identical with our own.** He was passing over the ground where Adam fell. He was now where, if He endured the test and trial in behalf of the fallen race, He would redeem Adam's disgraceful failure and fall, in our own humanity. {3SM 129.3}
- The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer **taking the place of fallen Adam.** With the sins of the world laid upon Him, He would go over the ground where Adam stumbled. He would bear a test infinitely more severe than that which Adam failed to endure. Con 17

- It is true that Christ at one time said of himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." John 14:30. Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But he could find nothing in the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. **Jesus did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought could he be brought to the power of Satan's temptations.** Yet it is written of Christ that he was tempted in all points like as we are. Many hold that from the nature of Christ it was impossible for Satan's temptations to weaken or overthrow him. Then Christ could not have been placed in Adam's position, to go over the ground where Adam stumbled and fell; he could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. Unless he was placed in a position as trying as that in which Adam stood, he could not redeem Adam's failure. If man has in any sense a more trying conflict to endure than had Christ, then Christ is not able to succor him when tempted. **Christ took humanity with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man with the possibility of yielding to temptation, and he relied upon divine power to keep him.** {GCB, February 25, 1895 par. 6}
- What love! What amazing condescension! The King of glory **proposed to humble Himself to fallen humanity!** He would place His feet in Adam's steps. He would take **man's fallen nature**, and engage to cope with the strong foe who triumphed over Adam. He would overcome Satan, and in thus doing He would open the way for the redemption from the disgrace of Adam's failure and fall, of all those who would believe on Him. {Con 18.1}
- **The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character;** and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the **earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men.** Thus they have remission of sins

that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

- III. Doesn't this trust/healing view condone salvation by works? Since we are not relying on Jesus payment of a penalty to cover our sins, it seems our salvation becomes a process we must work out ourselves.
- a. If Jesus isn't paying the penalty for sin and I'm not paying the penalty for sin, who IS paying?
 - b. Why does the Bible use the language about our penalty being paid on the cross if this is not what was accomplished by Jesus' death? Doesn't the wages of sin equal death??

What is the penalty for sin?

- Why does it have to be paid?
- To whom is the penalty paid?
- What is the problem with sin that it needs a penalty paid?
- Where did such an idea originate?
- From where does death arise?
- Does death come from God or from sin?

Is the idea that no legal penalty must be paid to anyone, the same as saying sin has no penalty?

The penalty of sin is: Eternal death (non-existence), experienced by the unrepentant after the Great White throne judgment.

For the **wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** James 1:15

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, **from that nature** will reap destruction; Gal 6:8

Evil will slay the wicked Psalms 34:21

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power **are not prepared** to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become **fixed in their characters.** Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests?

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. **They would welcome**

destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves**, and just and merciful on the part of God. {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that **the wicked are incurable**. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, **it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love**. {GC 543.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death**. {1SM 235.2}

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, **to reap that which they have sown**. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. GC 36

God is the fountain of life, and we can have life only as we are in communion with Him. **Separated from God, existence may be ours for a little time, but we do not possess life**. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she

liveth." 1 Timothy 5:6. **Only through the surrender of our will to God is it possible for Him to impart life to us.** Only by receiving His life through self-surrender is it possible, said Jesus, for these hidden sins, which I have pointed out, to be overcome. It is possible that you may bury them in your hearts and conceal them from human eyes, but how will you stand in God's presence? {MB 61.2}

If you cling to self, refusing to yield your will to God, you are choosing death. To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you. {MB 62.1}

The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked. {DA 107.4}

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Mal. 4:1),--Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, "Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; . . . I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. . . . Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Then "the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;" "they shall be as though they had not been." Ezek. 28:6-19; Ps. 37:10; Obadiah 16. {DA 763.4}

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Eph. 4:18; Prov. 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. **By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who**

unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

Is there a penalty for sin?

What is that penalty?

From where does death originate or arise?

Why do the wicked die eternally in the end?

What did Christ experience?

- Did Christ experience eternal non-existence?
- Did Christ have His individuality destroyed at the Cross?
- Did Christ arise this same Jesus, i.e. the same in character?
- Did Christ destroy something at the Cross? What?
- Did Christ die wanting to hide from the Father?
- Did Christ die distrusting the Father?
- Did Christ die hating others?
- Did Christ die when selfishness overcomes love in His heart?
- Did Christ die when love overcame the temptation of selfishness?
- Is there something different about Christ's death than the death of the wicked in the end?
- If legal penalty must be paid, and the "legal" penalty for sin is eternal death, eternal non-existence – did Jesus pay that penalty?
- But if the problem is not a legal problem, but an actual condition which is incompatible with life as God designed, then when Jesus died, purifying humanity, He accomplished what was necessary for our salvation!

Christ's death was an achievement, a victory, a remedy, a cure! He eradicated the infection from His humanity at the Cross, the wicked do not achieve this by their death. They die consumed by selfishness. Christ's death was love consuming and destroying selfishness!

What is the work that we are supposed to do for our salvation?

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” John 6:28,29

What does this mean?

- Jesus procured the remedy to sinfulness on His own with no contributions from any of us. No work we can do can procure a remedy, nor add to the remedy Christ procured.
- We only benefit from that remedy if we “trust” the doctor and take it. Thus, our work is to trust or believe and follow God’s instructions. We then receive the indwelling Spirit, who takes what Christ achieved and reproduces it in us.

IV. I have a problem with a God who wouldn't bring justice and punishment to the drunk driver who killed my daughter. If God won't use his power to punish and execute this man, I can't respect him. How can you respect and admire this wimpy God of yours?

- What if the man whose drunk driving killed your daughter was your first born son? What would you want done to him? If your son, who one night, as a teen, under peer pressure got drunk and drove home and while drunk got in a wreck which killed your daughter – what would you want to happen to your son? Would you want him punished, executed, tortured in eternal fire? Or would you want him, if possible, to be healed?
- We are all God’s children – what does He want for all of us?

Bible Justice – Bible definition is to do what is right – and what is the standard, in God’s universe which determines what rightness looks like? God’s law of love! Then what does God’s justice look like? It looks like helping others, showing compassion and mercy – no concept of punitive infliction of punishment, that is a human definition. Here is the Biblical evidence:

“Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice (*tsadaq*) to the afflicted and needy” (Psalm 82:3 NKJV).

Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. See that justice (*mishpat*) is done--- help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows. (Isaiah 1:16,17 GNB)

This is what the LORD says to the dynasty of David: ‘Give justice (*mishpat*) each morning to the people you judge! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors.’ (Jeremiah 21:12 NLT)

‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Enough, O princes of Israel! Remove violence and plundering, execute justice (*mispat*) and righteousness (*tsadaq*), and stop dispossessing my people,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘You shall have honest scales....’ (Ezekiel 45:9,10 NKJV)

The LORD is waiting to be kind to you. He rises to have compassion on you. The LORD is a God of justice (*mishpat*). (Isaiah 30:18 GW)

“This is what the LORD of Armies says: Administer real justice (*mishpat*), be compassionate and kind to each other.” (Zechariah 7:9 GW)

“He executes justice (*misphat*) for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:18 NASB)

- a. Why the seemingly contradictory verses in the Bible that make it sound like God really does inflict punishment? Why are there confusing verses even in the NT (even after the truth about God's character was revealed through Jesus)?

What verses?

To whom was God speaking?

Does a parent speak differently to an unruly child than an obedient child? Why?

If a child is rebelliously heading for a cliff, might a loving parent shout?

What are people doing when we find God threatening?

Then what do we find God doing? Warning, reproving, threatening and ultimately:

Letting go to reap their choice most frequently.

But sometimes, He acted to put people in the grave, why? To keep open the channel for the Messiah

- b. If God doesn't destroy sinners, why did he send a world wide flood? What about all the other OT stories where he kills people?
- c. Jesus tells a parable of the branches being gathered up and thrown into the fire. Why did Jesus himself use such active language in regards to the punishment of the wicked in the end?
- Who was Jesus talking to? What was their conception of God? Did they worship a God who would humble Himself or a power over God? Did they like it when God washed dirty feet? Did they like a God who would heal on Sabbath? Would they listen to this communication from Christ? Did Christ still love them? Would Christ still want to warn them of the dangers of rebellion and its

ultimate outcome? What kind of language would He have to speak?

If a parent threatens a child with discipline, or even if a parent says, if you ever drink the pesticides you will die a horrible and violent death, is the parent threatening?

d. Isn't it fair and just for the wicked to be punished? Doesn't the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy proclaim that the wicked will be punished according to their deeds?

- Isaiah 33:14,15 The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil...
- Exodus 3:2-4 God speaks to Moses at the bush – and what did the bush do? Burned – but did it get consumed? Stephen in Acts 7:30-36 confirms this same account.

Exodus 24:17 God came to Mt Sinai and His presence was described as a “consuming fire” did the elements melt like a nuclear explosion?

2 Chron 5:14 & 2 Chron 7:1-3 Tell us that when Solomon’s Temple was dedicated the Priests couldn’t enter because the brightness of God’s fiery glory was too great – but did the Temple burn down? So was it heat that was keeping the priests out?

Ezekiel 28:14,16 tells us that Lucifer, before his fall, used to walk among the “fiery stones” of God’s presence. Was this fire destructive?

Matthew 17:2 The Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus, in His human body that was still subject to death for it died on the Cross shortly thereafter, is bathed in fire. His face shown like the sun and His clothes were bright white, but did His clothes burn off or did He receive 3rd degree burns?

Duet 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29 Says, “our God is a consuming fire.”

Revelation 22:5 tells us that in the new earth there will be no need for the sun and moon to light the earth for God’s presence will be its light!

- What is the lie that Satan has foisted upon us? What is the distortion that all too many have bought into? Isn't it just this, the place you don't want to go, the place you don't want to be for eternity is the place of eternal burnings and consuming fire, in other words, the traditional Christian concept of hell? And yet the Bible says that this place is God's very presence, His throne surrounded by a sea of glass mingled with fire (Rev 15:2)!

The righteous will be transformed by this life giving glory – as Moses was after 40 days with God. Moses came down off the mountain and his face was radiating this fiery glory (Ex 34:29-35). But did Moses have 3rd degree burns? No, the fire was not harmful. But what about the children of Israel? When they saw Moses what did they do? They begged him to put a veil over his face because this light caused them anguish and suffering. But what kind of suffering? Suffering of mind. Why? Because their consciences were guilty, because they didn't value God's methods and principles, because they preferred lies and selfishness; the light of heavenly love and truth caused them to suffer.

At the second coming of Christ this same fire that transforms the righteous, as we are changed in a

twinkling of an eye, as this mortal puts on immortality, as we are invigorated by this life giving fire, this same fire is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 as destroying the man of sin.

But what kind of fire is this? Why doesn't it consume and turn to ash bushes, buildings, and people? How does it instead transform and heal the righteous, but at the same time cause anguish, discomfort, pain, and destruction of the wicked? What kind of fire is this?

This is a fire that is to cleanse the earth of sin, a fire that consumes wickedness. So let me ask you a couple of questions:

What is a book made out of?

What is a table or chair made out of?

What is sin made out of?

The fire at the end is the fire that consumes sin, not material substances. So what is sin made out of? Sin is an idea, attitude, thought, method, or principle and at its root there are two elements that sin is based upon: **Lies and selfishness**

Now what is it that consumes and destroys a lie?

The truth! The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth.

What is it that consumes and destroys selfishness?

Love! God is Love!

- So when God's Spirit comes it is the Spirit of Truth and Love. At Pentecost, when the Spirit came, the people saw "tongues of fire!" So why didn't the house burn down or anyone get injured?

Then why will the wicked suffer when the fires of truth and love burn freely, when these fires of truth and love transform, ennoble, and invigorate the righteous, when the fire of God's presence is revealed? The Bible does not leave us in doubt, but tells us directly:

- 2 Thes 2:10 They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
- What happens in the mind of those who have rejected truth and cling to falsehood; when the truth of God comes shining through? Torment of mind, anguish of heart, suffering of psyche! And what happens to those whose hearts are filled with selfishness when pure, undiluted love of God comes shining through? Proverbs 25:21,22 and Romans 12:20 tells us that:
 - "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
 - What will those who have solidified their minds in lies and who have hardened their hearts in selfishness do when Christ appears and they come face to face with undiluted, infinite truth and love?
 - Revelation 6:15,16: Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"
 - Why will they do this? Is God inflicting an external penalty upon them or is their very condition the cause of their suffering when they come into God's loving and holy presence?

God has actually given us evidence that the fire of His presence consumes sin, not material substances. In Leviticus we read about Aaron's sons who, as priests, brought unauthorized fire before the Lord. Notice what happens:

- Leviticus 10:1-5 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD... Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.
- Notice that fire from the presence of the Lord "CONSUMED" them yet their bodies weren't burnt and their tunics were still intact. The fire is the fire of truth and love which totally overwhelms those living in lies and selfishness, those who haven't been healed in heart and mind to be like Jesus.

But what about passages in Revelation that speak about fire and brimstone? That sounds like a fire that burns the flesh, a fire of combustion, a fire that consumes bushes, temples, and people. What about that?

The word translated brimstone or sulfur is the Greek word "thion," the neutered form of "thios," which means divine, divinity, godhead and from whence we get the word theology (to study the divine). Therefore, the phrase translated "fire and brimstone" can more accurately be translated "divine incense" or "holy fire." Again, we are brought back to the understanding that it is the fire of God's presence that is being depicted, not literal burning sulfur stones! Could it be that this is the same fiery stones Lucifer walked amongst before his fall as described in Ezekiel 28:14? Could it be that this is the fire that Elijah rode in when the chariot of fire took him to heaven (2 Kings 2:11)?

- Again the Bible leaves us in no doubt. Read this passage which talks about burning sulfur carefully. Noticing where it takes place:

- Revelation 14:9-11 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur (holy fire) in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."
- Where does the suffering and torment take place? In the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. And what kind of suffering is this? Mental anguish, suffering of heart, pain of mind, torment of psyche as each person comes face to face with the truth about themselves, their history, their opportunities rejected. They come face to face with the pain and suffering they have caused in contrast to the total love, grace, and goodness of God. And when each individual has reviewed the truth about their own lives, when the truth has burned through all the lies and becomes too overwhelming, when the psychological pain is too great they finally experience the full separation from God they have chosen and physically die the second, eternal death. And then, after all the wicked have died of their own unhealed condition, a literal, cleansing fire comes and melts the elements with fervent heat and the earth will be made new, the eternal home of the righteous (2 Peter 3:10-12).

V. This trust/healing view sounds suspiciously like the Moral Influence Theory which I've been warned against by my pastor. Is it the same thing? If not, what are the differences?

- Can you tell me what you mean by Moral Influence Theory?
- Ask this question – most who quote this have no idea what moral influence theory is. But, they will likely say

something like this.

- Moral Influence Theory is the theory that Christ died to cause a moral influence upon mankind, (which of course He did), but MIT fails to include the legal aspects of what Christ had to accomplish. Or they might say, MIT focuses on the subjective aspects of the atonement, how it influences us, and denies the objective aspects of the atonement, Christ paying the legal penalty. One of the classic ways this is said is, “We have no problem with what you affirm, we have a problem with what you deny.” And they suggest we deny Christ had any objective aspects to His mission.
- Now, our view is much more comprehensive than classic MIT, but ask them what “theory” of atonement was taught in Christianity for the first 300 years after Christ? It was MIT.
- The Moral View was taught by the early church, ^{1,2,3,4,5} by people like: the *Epistle to Diognetus*,⁶ *The Shepherd of Hermas*,⁷ works by Clement of Rome,^{8,9,10,11} Ignatius of Antioch,^{12,13} Polycarp,¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria,¹⁵ Hippolytus of Rome,¹⁶ Origen,^{17,18} Irenaeus,¹⁹ and Arnobius.²⁰ The Penal View became popular with the conversion of Constantine and the incorporation of Roman Imperialistic concepts of government into Christianity and the change in how God’s law was viewed from the law of love, to an imposed law.
- Ask them when penal substitution came in? It was after Constantine converted and the little horn changed God’s law to an imposed law, which now required imposed penalties, and thus a penal substitution.
- Our model is called the Healing Substitution – and understands that mankind was changed by Adam’s sin such that humankind no longer naturally operated in harmony with God’s law of love, but was infected with Satan’s principle of selfishness, AKA survival of the fittest. This condition, without remedy, is terminal.

- God sent His Son into the world:
 1. To reveal truth which destroys lies and wins us to trust (Col 1:20) (Morally Influence, Subjective accomplishment);
 2. To destroy the devil (Heb 2:14) (Objective accomplishment);
 3. To destroy the carnal nature/death (2Tim 1:10) (Objective accomplishment);
 4. To destroy the devil's work, by restoring God's law of love back into humanity and thus restore God's character in man (1John 3:8) (Objective accomplishment).

In other words, to fix all the damage sin has caused in the hearts, minds and beings of God's creation.

Documentation for Healing Substitution Model:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Col 1:19,20

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death **he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil** Heb 2:14

Christ Jesus, who has **destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2Tim 1:10

The reason the Son of God appeared was to **destroy the devil's work**. 1John 3:8

The life of Christ is to be revealed in humanity. Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a

counterpart of God; but **Satan has labored to obliterate the image of God in man, and to imprint upon him his own image.** {LHU 48.2}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us, but in our hearts and characters.--Letter 406, 1906. {7ABC 464.2}

As the Saviour is lifted up before the people, they will see his humiliation, his self-denial, his self-sacrifice, his goodness, his tender compassion, his sufferings to save fallen man, and will realize **that the atonement of Christ was not the cause of God's love, but the result of that love. Jesus died because God loved the world. The channel had to be made whereby the love of God should be recognized by man, and flow into the sinner's heart in perfect harmony with truth and justice.** {RH, September 2, 1890 par. 7}

The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." God suffered with His Son, in the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary; the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption--The Home Missionary, April, 1893. {7ABC 472.5}

God himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father. {ST, March 26, 1894 par. 5}

As a remedy for the terrible consequences into which selfishness led the human race, God gave His only begotten Son to die for mankind. How could He have given more? In this gift He gave Himself. "I and My Father are one," said Christ. By the gift of His Son, God has made it possible for man to be redeemed and restored to oneness with Him. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **Love is the great principle that actuates unfallen beings.** With amazement the angels behold the indifference that those who have light and knowledge manifest toward a world unsaved. **The heavenly host are filled with an intense desire to work through human agencies to restore in man the image of God. They are ready and waiting to do this work.** The combined power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is pledged to uplift man from his fallen state. Every attribute, every power of divinity has been placed at the command of those who unite with the Saviour in winning men to God. O, that all would appreciate the truth as it is in Jesus. O, that all would love God in return for the love wherewith He has loved them. {WB, September 9, 1902 par. 4}

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin.** It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the

heart. David had **the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."** Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

"In assuming human nature, that he might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery and lift man up, Christ has shown what estimate he places upon the human race. In this work everything was at stake. Satan claimed to be the lawful owner of the fallen race; and with what persistent effort did he seek to overthrow Christ through his subtilty! It was only by the most desperate conflict with the powers of Satan that **Christ could accomplish his purpose of restoring the almost obliterated image of God in man, and place his own signature upon his forehead.** It was a desperate battle; for Satan had so long worked in league with human intelligencies as to almost completely intercept every ray of light shining from the throne of God upon the human mind. **The cross of Calvary alone could destroy the works of the devil.** In that wondrous sacrifice all eyes were called to 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' The love of Christ kindles in the heart of all who continue to behold him. {General Conference Daily Bulletin, March 2, 1897 par. 17}

In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. **Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost.** GC 645

Weakened through sin, we can not of ourselves keep the law of God. **But Christ came to our world to**

restore the moral image of God in men, and to bring them back from the path of disobedience to a path of obedience. His mission to the world was to **reveal the character of God by living the law, which is the foundation of his government**; and those who will accept him as their personal Saviour will grow in grace, and in his strength will be enabled to obey the law of God. {ST, February 11, 1897 par. 15}

Because man fallen could not overcome Satan with his human strength, **Christ came from the royal courts of heaven to help him with His human and divine strength combined**. Christ knew that Adam in Eden with his superior advantages might have withstood the temptations of Satan and conquered him. He also knew that it was not possible for man out of Eden, separated from the light and love of God since the fall, to resist the temptations of Satan in his own strength. **In order to bring hope to man, and save him from complete ruin, He humbled Himself to take man's nature, that with His divine power combined with the human He might reach man where he is. He obtained for the fallen sons and daughters of Adam that strength which it is impossible for them to gain for themselves**, that in His name they might overcome the temptations of Satan. {Confrontation 45}

- VI. Why does the Bible and EGW talk so much of forgiveness rather than cleansing and healing? Why, if our understanding is correct, if sin doesn't have some "legal penalty" are we to ask God for forgiveness for our sin. Shouldn't we be asking him for healing from the sin that is separating us from Him. Shouldn't we be praying for that desire for sin to be removed from our lives so that He can fully live in us and teach us to Love?

Healing Substitution Model: Forgiveness originates in the heart of God and is an expression of His character of love. God's attitude is always one of forgiveness. But redemptive forgiveness includes more than God's personal pardon of our sin. It involves actual reclaiming from sin. To experience forgiveness necessitates a transforming change in the believer, and this necessitated the death of Christ, "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of [remission – reclaiming from] sin" (Heb 9:22).

Documentation for Healing Substitution Model:

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "**The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness,** rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. Exodus 34:6,7

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD, because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the LORD. "**For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.**" Jeremiah 31:34

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But **so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....**" Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." And the man got up and went home. Matthew 9:4-7

Jesus said, "Father, **forgive them,** for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:28

In him we have **redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins**, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. Ephesians 1:7

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin.** It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had **the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."** Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

How few make this truth, that only through faith in the **cleansing blood of Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of the sins that cling to human beings like the foul leprosy, a living reality.** {1SM 107.2}

Let the mind and heart awaken to gratitude, and let us come to the Father in the name of Jesus, asking for the **forgiveness of sins, for the cleansing from all unrighteousness.** Let us

plead with God that he may "cleanse us with hyssop," that we may be clean, wash us, that we may be "whiter than snow." He will restore unto us the "joy of his salvation," put within us a new heart, a right spirit, put a "new song" into our mouths, "even praise unto our God." {ST, August 28, 1893 par. 9}

The cleansing of the soul from sin includes the gifts of forgiveness, justification, and sanctification. And the inward cleansing of the heart is shown by the outward cleansing of the life. {7MR 341.2}

Our position is demonstrated throughout scripture, but particularly at the crucifixion. Those people who crucified Christ were personally pardoned (forgiven) by our Savior. Yet, they did not open their hearts to Him in order to be delivered from sin, therefore, even though Christ forgave, they remained unforgiven, i.e. undelivered from their selfish hearts.

Christ's death was not necessary for God to personally pardon. It was necessary for God to reclaim sinners from sin. In other words, without the death of Christ mankind could not be delivered from sin. So, while God remained forgiving, without Christ's death man would have remained infected with sin. Thus, redemptive forgiveness required sinfulness in humanity to be put into remission, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Hebrews 9:22. Without Christ's life, death and resurrection sin in humanity would not remit and thus mankind could not be restored to God's original design that He created man in Adam to be

- VII. Isn't it just semantics? What difference does it really make?

We have power over what we believe, but what we believe has power over us.

- Placebo/Nocebo effect
- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust

The law of worship – by beholding we become changed, or modeling, we become like that which we admire and worship – means that we will be transformed in character, mind, brain based on the beliefs we hold.

Those who worship a severe arbitrary god become like him. Those who worship a loving God become like Him.

Brain science confirms this, meditate on God of love and brain regions which correspond to altruistic love grow stronger and fear circuits calm. Other god concepts do not show this benefit, but increase fear.

Romans 1, 2Cor 10:3-5

- VIII. God's final judgment against sinners is all throughout the Bible. How can you say that in the end we are judging God's character not vice versa?
- a. It all stems from what you believe the problem is – what is the problem? If the problem with sin is that it offends God and God, as the Imperial ruler of the universe, must impose penalties to be just then we read the judgment passages one way. If on the other hand, God's law is the design template for life then we read judgment passages differently.
 - b. Also, a God of love will speak a language that will be understood by the people He is speaking to. Jesus said He had much to tell His disciples but they couldn't bear it. We find God using language of a very primitive, legal nature, to communicate to people who are darkened in their understanding.

Consider the story of Ahab and Macaiah in 1Kings
22.

1. We judge God to be trustworthy and reject the lies of Satan (Romans 3:4), or not. Our judgment of God determines whether we trust Him and thereby determines whether we are healed from sin or die from sin;
2. Heavenly beings judge God to be trustworthy in His dealings with Satan and sinful mankind;
3. At the Great White Throne Judgment, every man faces his own character/condition/record and suffers the punishment of unhealed sin;
4. God's judgment regarding sin is not an arbitrary declaration that causes something to suddenly become a sin. It's an affirmation of the obvious: Sin is a deviation from the law of love. God's judgment simply affirms the reality that the sinner is ultimately, by their own choice, beyond God's healing.

Rev. 14:7 "Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come." How do we understand such straightforward language and also the judgment prophecies of Daniel?"

Fear, in this context, is referring to those who will bring God glory, so it is the experience of the saved not the lost, and therefore means awe, admiration, reverence, amazement, wonderment with God's being. Glory refers to God's character (Exodus 33,34), and in this context refers to those who bring God glory by revealing God's character in their lives.

So does the Revelation passage refer to God sitting in judgment of us, or is it the time when submits Himself to our judgment?

What did the war in heaven, initiated by Lucifer, start over?

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when **thou art judged.** KJV

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, “That You may be justified in Your words, And **prevail when You are judged.**” NASB

Certainly not! God must be true, even though every human being is a liar. As the scripture says, “You must be shown to be right when you speak; **you must win your case when you are being tried.**” GNT

No! God will continue to be true even when every person is false. As the Scriptures say: “So you will be shown to be right when you speak, **and you will win your case.**” NCV

Satan lied about God and humanity believed those lies severing our connection with God. Christ came to restore that connection and reverse the damage sin caused humanity. At the end of time God is calling for a people who know Him, who have rejected the lies Satan has told about Him, who have judged God to be trustworthy and thus opened their hearts to Him and experience His healing power. Such people will be transformed to live lives of love revealing God’s character in their lives thus bringing glory to God! As such they are powerful witnesses to the world and universe of God’s character of love, His methods and principles.

God foretold this reality through his prophet Daniel. There are several texts that refer to this same event – Daniel 8:14, Daniel 7:9-14,21,22, Malachi 3:1-4, and the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25 (GC 426.1). Each of these passages gives insight into this judgment that each of us must personally investigate.

Daniel 8:14 predicts the time this event will begin, no other significant details are given in the 8:14 text. In Daniel 7 we are given more insight, but what is being described?

Daniel 7:21,22 gives insight:

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

The above rendering is from the NIV which many, who assume the legal model, prefer. But does the meaning of the passage change when we read from the King James Version?

Until the Ancient of days came, and **judgment was given to the saints** of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22

Which translation is more accurate? The Hebrew word translated “pronounced” actually means “to give” or “to impart” and thus the KJV would be more accurate in this context. Why do the saints of God need judgment or discernment imparted to them? The Daniel text tells us the horn warred against the saints and was defeating them. What kind of warfare was going on?

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:3-5

What kind of war? Where is it being fought? This is a war between truth and lies, fought in our minds and centering on God’s character! Amazingly, Paul makes the connection to the cleansing of the Temple even closer and shows how the Temple is connected to this war going on in our minds:

Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of

lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's **temple**, proclaiming himself to be God. 2Thes 2:2-4

Paul is describing the exact same events as Daniel 7 in which evil powers war against the saints and oppose God. In the aftermath of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, did this man of lawlessness ride into heaven overthrow God, set himself up in God's temple in heaven and proclaim himself to be God? No, where did this happen? In the Spirit Temple! In our minds! Therefore, the cleansing of the temple as described in the Bible is the cleansing of our minds from the lies about God, which wins us to trust and results in our cleansing from sin.

Daniel is told in vision that an evil power would arise that would lie, distort, misrepresent God and defile the Spirit Temple by getting humans to accept, worship and teach a false picture of God. That it would be 2300 years before enough truth would be recovered for Christ to empower His people on earth with judgment to break free from the lies and be cleansed in their minds and characters. All of this is confirmed for us by the other text describing the same event as Daniel 8:14, Malachi 3:1-3:

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will **purify the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver.

What is getting cleansed during this judgment period? The Levites and who are the Levites? The Priesthood of believers (1Pet 2:5,9). God is cleansing His people from what? Two things – first God cleanses us from the lies about Him which keep us from trusting Him and then, when we are won back to trust, He cleanses us from sin. God writes His law of love into

our hearts. He restores His character of righteousness in us. This is what is happening during the investigative judgment. How does this happen? By our investigating the truth about God as revealed in Christ, rejecting the lies, and clinging to the truth and trusting God! Many have a very difficult time with this truth because of certain Bible passages that are misunderstood, such as:

As I judged your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezekiel 20:36

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. Romans 14:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 1Peter 1:17

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. Revelation 20:12

These texts are read, by those who prefer a legal model, to mean that God's judgment *determines* our destiny, either saved or lost in the form of an arbitrary decision on His part. But this is not the case. God's judgment is merely the accurate diagnosis of our condition either healed and restored to Christlikeness or incurable. An example of God's judgment is found in Hosea 4:17:

Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! Hosea 4:17

What is God's judgment in this case? Ephraim cannot be separated from his idols leave him the way he is. What determines our eternal destiny is not God's judgment upon us, but our judgment of God, which in turn makes us either fit or unfit for living in God's system of other-centered love. If we judge God trustworthy then we open the heart and His Spirit heals us from sin. If, instead, we accept Satan's lies and judge God as untrustworthy we keep the heart closed and are eventually beyond healing. One day all will stand in God's presence and their true condition will be revealed – this is God's judgment.

Those who sew to the carnal nature from that nature will reap destruction. Galatians 6:8.

Or as Jesus Said,

“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. John 12:47,48

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Mathew 12:33-37.

It is our very condition that determines our eternal destiny. We cannot make ourselves good. We can only be made good by the power of God working in us. And what determines whether

God's power is experienced within a mind/heart? Whether that person trusts God and opens their heart to Him or not.

This reality is stated beautifully in the book The Great Controversy:

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare **God's verdict that the wicked are incurable**. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love. {GC 543.1}

Does God's verdict make the wicked incurable or does God's verdict merely pronounce the reality that already exists in the hearts and minds of the lost – that they are incurable? We do not need to fear God who is trying to save and heal us; we need to fear sin, which if unremedied will destroy us!

They thought themselves passing judgment on Christ; but in rejecting Him they were pronouncing sentence upon themselves. "He that is of God," said Jesus, "heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." {DA 468.1}

The lesson is true for all time. Many a man who delights to quibble, to criticize, seeking for something to question in the word of God, thinks that he is thereby giving evidence of independence of thought, and mental acuteness. **He supposes that he is sitting in judgment on the Bible, when in truth he is judging himself.** He makes it manifest that he is incapable of appreciating truths that originate in heaven, and that compass eternity. DA 468.2

The people who beheld the Saviour at His advent were favored with a fuller manifestation of the divine presence than the world had ever enjoyed before. **The knowledge of God was revealed more perfectly. But in this very revelation,**

judgment was passing upon men. Their character was tested, their destiny determined. {DA 475.2}

In the case of each individual there is a process going forward which is far more wonderful than that which transfers the features to the polished plate of the artist. The art of the photographer merely imprints the likeness on perishable substance; but in the life-record the character is faithfully delineated, and this record, however dark, can never be effaced except by the blood of the atoning Sacrifice. {Mar 340.2}

Angels of God are taking a daguerreotype of the character just as accurately as the artist takes the likeness of the human features; and . . . it is from this that we are to be judged! {Mar 340.3}

When the Judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, there will be many astonishing disclosures. Men will not then appear as they appear to the human eyes and finite judgments. Secret sins will then be laid open to the view of all. Motives and intentions which have been hidden in the dark chambers of the heart will be revealed. {Mar 340.4}

All will appear as a real life-picture. {Mar 340.5}

In that solemn and awful hour the unfaithfulness of the husband will be opened to the wife, and the unfaithfulness of the wife, to the husband. Parents will then learn, for the first time, what was the real character of their children, and children will see the errors and mistakes that marked the lives of their parents. The man who robbed his neighbor through false representations, is not to escape with his ill-gotten gains. God has an exact record in His books, of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. {Mar 340.6}

Memory will be true and vivid in condemnation of the guilty one, who in that day is found wanting. The

mind will recall all the thoughts and acts of the past; the whole life will come in review like the scenes in a panorama. {Mar 340.7}

IX. Didn't Jesus bear the wrath of God on the cross? Won't sinners have to do the same in the end since they didn't accept Jesus gift of salvation?

- a. In regards to God's wrath: Why does the Bible say "it is a terrifying thing to fall in the hands of the living God" if God's wrath is simply him letting us go? Wouldn't that mean we were in the hands of Satan instead?

God's wrath is not like human vengeance. Because God desires only the service of love, He can never force anyone to live out His law against their will. Thus, God's wrath is His ultimate and final gift of love for those who refuse His cure. God's wrath is His abandoning, forsaking, giving up, and ultimately letting people go in response to the choices that they have made. As a result, the sinner is allowed to reap what they have freely chosen – the suffering of unremedied sin, which culminates in eternal non-existence.

“My anger will flame up like fire and burn everything on earth. It will reach to the world below and consume the roots of the mountains. I will bring on them endless disasters and use **all my arrows against them.**” (Deuteronomy 32:22,23 – GN)...
“They fail to see why they were defeated; they cannot understand what happened. Why were a thousand defeated by one, and ten thousand by only two? **The Lord, their God, had abandoned them; their mighty God had given them up.**” (Deuteronomy 32:29,30 – GN)

“When that happens, **I will become angry with them; I will abandon them**, and they will be destroyed. Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then they will realize that these **things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them.**” (Deuteronomy 31:17 – GN)

“**I will fight against you with all my might, my anger, my wrath, and my fury.** I will kill everyone living in this city; people and animals alike **will die of a terrible disease...** Anyone who stays in the city will be **killed in war or by starvation or disease...** It will be **given over** to the king of Babylonia, and **he** will burn it to the ground. I, the LORD, have spoken...I will set your palace on fire, and the fire will burn down everything around it. I, the LORD, have spoken.” (Jeremiah 21:5,6,9-10,14 – GN)

“The LORD **has abandoned** his people like a lion that leaves its cave. The horrors of war and the LORD’s **fierce anger** have turned the country into a desert.” (Jeremiah 25:38 – GN)

“The LORD, the God of Israel, told me to go and say to King Zedekiah of Judah, ‘I, the LORD, will **hand this city over** to the king of Babylonia, and **he** will burn it down. (Jeremiah 34:2 – GN)

“Very well, then, **I will give you freedom: the freedom to die by war, disease, and starvation.**” (Jeremiah 34:17 – GN)

“**You will feel my anger when I turn it loose on you** like a blazing fire. And **I will hand you over** to brutal men, experts at destruction.” (Ezekiel 21:31 – GN)

“**I will hand you over to other nations** who will rob you and plunder you.” (Ezekiel 25:7 – GN)

“The king killed the young men of Judah even in the Temple. He had no mercy on anyone, young or old, man or woman, sick or healthy. **God handed them all over to him.**” (2 Chronicles 36:17 – GN)

“I will attack the people of Israel and Judah like a lion. I myself will tear them to pieces and then leave them. When I drag them off, no one will be able to save them. **I will abandon** my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps in their suffering they will try to find me.” (Hosea 5:14,15 – GN)

God’s anger is revealed from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent the truth from being known. **God punishes them,** because what can be known about God is plain to them, for God himself made it plain...They say they are wise, but they are fools; instead of worshiping the immortal God, they worship images made to look like mortals or birds or animals or reptiles. **And so God has given those people over to do the filthy things their hearts desire,** and they do shameful things with each other. **They exchange the truth about God for a lie;** they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever! Amen. Because they do this, **God has given them over** to shameful passions....**Because those people refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, he has given them over** to corrupted minds, so that they do the things that they should not do.” (Romans 1:18,19,22-26,28 – GN)

“Because of our sins he was **given over** to die...”
(Romans 4:25 – GN)

“My God, my God, why have you **forsaken me?**”
Matt 27:46

Then "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" "My God, My God, **why hast Thou forsaken Me?**" As the outer gloom settled about the Saviour, many voices exclaimed: The **vengeance of heaven** is upon Him. The bolts of **God's wrath** are hurled at Him, because He claimed to be the Son of God. Many who believed on Him heard His despairing cry. Hope left them. If **God had forsaken Jesus**, in what could His followers trust? {DA 754.3}

"I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way; "They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproveth, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, **if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them. "It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress,** and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of." Manuscript Release vol. 14, p. 3

God bears long with the rebellion and apostasy of His subjects. Even when His mercy is despised and His love scorned and derided, He bears with men until the last resource for leading them to repentance is exhausted. But there are limits to His forbearance. **From those who to the end continue in obstinate rebellion, He removes His protecting care. Providence will no longer shield them from**

Satan's power. They will have sinned away their day of grace. {RH, September 17, 1901 par. 7}

God keeps a reckoning with the nations. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. Those who work evil toward their fellow men, saying, How doth God know? will one day be called upon to **meet long-deferred vengeance.** In this age a more than common contempt is shown to God. Men have reached a point in insolence and disobedience which shows that their **cup of iniquity is almost full.** Many have well-nigh **passed the boundary of mercy.** Soon **God will show that He is indeed the living God.** He will say to the angels, "*No longer combat Satan in his efforts to destroy.* Let him work out his malignity upon the children of disobedience; for the cup of their iniquity is full. They have advanced from one degree of wickedness to another, adding daily to their lawlessness. *I will no longer interfere to prevent the destroyer from doing his work.*" {RH, September 17, 1901 par. 8}

It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. **Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,--as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.** Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner. {DA 471.1}

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. **He who "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" was looked upon by the Jews as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" and**

they hid their faces from Him. Isa. 53:4, 3. {DA 471.2}

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. **The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.** But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ. {DA 471.3}

- X. Isn't all scripture "God breathed"? If so then how can you challenge the word of God? Shouldn't we place the word of God above our own fallible human reasoning?

Is everything written in the Bible inspired of God? Does that mean every verse of Bible tells the truth? Or is some of Scripture a historical record of events? When Satan said, "you will not surely die." Were those words inspired of God? Did God inspire the recording of those words? How much of scripture is like this, the message not inspired of God, but the recording of the event is inspired of God?

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 1Cor 7:12-13

How much of Scripture is like this, Godly men sharing their wisdom, but not having a direct message from God?

1Kings 22 – Micaiah gives a message to Ahab that God sent a lying spirit into the mouths of Ahab's prophets. Does God have angels in heaven who go out and lie for Him?

How much of Scripture is like this – prophets speaking a metaphorical language to give a message that the listener could relate to. In this case a message of warning to Ahab that he will be killed if he goes to war with Ramoth Gilead.

Saul said to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.”

But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵ When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 1Sam 31:4,5

Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, ¹⁴ and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse. 1Chron 10:13,14

How much of the Bible is like this – describing God as causing that which He allows, or does not prevent?

- Isaiah 1:18 –Come let us reason together...
- Romans 14:5 Let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind.
- Hebrews 5:14 the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong.

Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him. By earnest attention and prayerful thought he must **learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and

drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles. {COL 59.5}

How we are to learn the meaning without reasoning?
Is there some way to understand God's Word
without reasoning?

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that **appeals to our reason;** and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

How we are to evaluate the evidence God has given, to understand it, value it, apply it and embrace it without using our reason? And if the evidence of Scripture has to go through the faculty of reason before it can be appropriately assimilated then what sense does it make to suggest reason bow before divine revelation? Did God not reveal Himself for the purpose of enlightening and ennobling human reason?

If the point is merely to say that human reason couldn't discover the evidence for God on its own and must rely upon God to provide the evidence of Himself upon which reason is then to reflect and conclude, then simply say that. Why the need to infer some diminishment of reason?

Human reason cannot of its own ability or initiative discover or figure out God, but is dependent upon God revealing Himself to us. However, once God has

provided evidence of Himself (and other issues such as the nature of sin) we must then evaluate that evidence through the faculty of human reason enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Is this not correct? If not please help me understand a better way to comprehend truth.

- XI. Based on the teaching and discussions in the Come & Reason class, it could appear that the class thinks they are “right” about their view and that those who differ are “wrong.” Can’t there be some variation on what we believe about God’s character, since nobody can have it completely figured out? Does this mean that the class thinks that you have to agree with their model in order to be “saved”?

When Christ returns will there be anyone on earth who knows 100% correctly every detail of Scripture? Salvation is not by getting all our facts right.

Salvation, is healing, healing what? Our hearts and minds, which means what? It means having selfishness replaced with genuine other centered love:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.
For the accuser of our brothers,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.

- ¹¹ They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
**they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:10,11

Salvation is having our hearts changed so that we no longer seek to save self:

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. Mark 16:25

What enhances our ability to experience this transformation? What prevents it?

Is it necessary to trust our lives to God in order to experience this change? Does our conception of God impact our ability to trust Him with our lives?

Is there a difference in trusting God with our legal payment and trusting God with our lives? Does it make a difference to seek, through God's grace to experience victory over fear and selfishness, to have the law written on the heart and love as God loves, rather than seek to have you sins paid and your records erased?

When you seek to get your sins paid and record erased who are you focusing on? When you seek to love others who are you focusing on?

XII. My pastor said in a sermon recently that if it weren't for the fact that God wouldn't save him, he would start visiting bars and invite the church to get drunk with him. Shouldn't there be something deeper that prevents that kind of behavior?

- a. What is the premise of the position? That there is nothing inherently wrong with sin, there is something wrong with God. If God wouldn't punish, I could sin and enjoy it and be happy. This is part of the legal penal view of the sin problem, that sin requires God to punish and if He wouldn't, then we could sin without fear of bad outcomes.
- b. This idea fails to understand the true nature of God's law as the design template for life and each sin changes the sinner and damages the very

faculties capable of responding to truth and love.

XIII. when sinners are brought back into actual unity of heart and mind with their Creator! We are "at-one" with God when we have hearts, minds and characters that love as He does." What does this look like...are we sinless, or still a recovering sinner...as in "I am an alcoholic (sinner)...even though I hate sin...I still make mistakes and do things, daily, that are "sinful"...self centered. And yet I love what Christ is and long to be like Him and be healed of this sickness...what is perfection? Is there such a thing before heaven? It is discouraging to be ever striving for a loving heart and yet to love as Jesus loved seems almost impossible at times. And then to really know what love means in regard to what is health for self and for others...we always see a distorted view of love in this world, just as we see a distorted view of God's love preached in Church...

Bible perfection is about maturity, having a change of heart such that we love others more than self and would give our lives for others. It is not about perfect hearing, vision, physical coordination, reflexes, or neural circuits. Thus it is not about perfect behavioral performance, but about a mature trust in God to finish His healing in our lives and trusting Him with how things turn out enough that we won't act in selfishness to protect ourselves at the expense of others.