

*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **he loved us**, and sent his Son as the **atoning sacrifice** [the corrective lens/mirror to show us the real truth about God that we tortured and killed because He violated our views of deity] for our sins [He identified with our false identities (2 Cor. 5:21) to show us the natural consequences that believing those lies about God and ourselves will cause]. Beloved, if God **loved us in this way** [humbly, compassionately, relentless loving and forgiving us unconditionally no matter how vicious and ungrateful we are], we also ought to love one another [as reflectors of His reflection of God's unconditional forgiveness and relentless love].*

*No one has seen God at any time [with the sole exception of Jesus who came directly from God (John 1:18; 6:46)]. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his **love has been perfected in us**. [Loving others affirms this] **By this we know that we remain in him** and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God. We **know** and have **believed the love which God has for us**. God is love, and he who **remains in love** remains in God, and **God remains in him**. In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may **have boldness** in the day of judgment, because **as he is, even so are we** in this world. There is **no fear in love**; but perfect **love casts out fear**, because **fear has punishment**. He who **fears is not made perfect in love**. We love Him, because **he first loved us**. If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should also love his brother. (1 John 4:10-21)*

I must **reframe everything** I think about the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of the **truth He brings about God's disposition** towards me. It is all about what I **choose to believe**, and belief is the same word as faith. The **fundamental question** I need to address directly is **who I am going to trust to define who I am, who God is** and the truth about **my relationship** to Him. In other words, who will I allow to **define my identity**. From this point the **direction is set** for **how I define everything** I read in Scripture. Without this **correction of underlying presumptions** it is impossible to make sense of how the gospel relates to me personally.

*Therefore we know no one after the flesh from now on. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Therefore if anyone is **in Christ, he is a new creation**. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. But **all things are of God**, who **reconciled us to himself** through Jesus Christ, and gave to us the **ministry of reconciliation**; namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling** the world to himself, **not reckoning to them their trespasses**, and having committed to us the word of reconciliation. We are therefore **ambassadors on behalf of Christ**, as though **God were entreating by us**. We beg you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**. For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him **we might become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)*

Again, when we read this with an understanding that the **root issue** is all about **identity** and who we **choose to identify with**, who we believe is telling the **truth about our identity** and **God's identity**, it shapes a whole **new context**. Indeed, all things have become **new and fresh and alive!**

*Therefore, putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, **receive with humility the implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**. (James 1:21)*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. The same was in the beginning with God. **All things were made** through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made. **In him was life**, and the life was **the light of men**. The **light shines** in the darkness, and the darkness hasn't overcome it. (John 1:1-5)*

*For **God so loved** the world that **he gave** his only Son, so that everyone who **believes in him may not perish** but may have eternal life. Indeed, **God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world**, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17 NRSV)*

How we **perceive God's disposition** has **everything** to do with **salvation**. This is **not peripheral** but central for bringing about an **end to the reign of sin** in our lives and in the universe. It is **God's reputation** that has been **damaged the most**, and salvation is more about vindicating God's reputation than it is about rescuing us as important as that may be to us. **Until our thinking and disposition** towards God is **transformed to align** with the real truth about His heart of love, the **effect of sin still retains strongholds** in us, and we remain in need of purification from the lies that make us live in fear of His presence.

Good God Context Coupled with Identity

Here lies the crux of the matter. **Whatever I choose to believe** about my **real identity**, and what I believe God is like, becomes the **context** in which **every other decision derives its direction**. If I keep insisting I have a **wicked heart** and I am a **sinner**, then **no matter how hard I try** to 'fight the good fight of faith,' sooner or later I **slip up** and will gravitate back to my **inescapable identity** as sinner. This **sets us me for failure**, not because I don't want to be free from the power of sin, but because I am **fighting the fight of faith in the wrong way**. I am living **double-minded**, and James warns that a double-minded person **cannot expect to receive** anything from God.

*But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for **he who doubts** is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For let that man not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:6-8)*

*But when you ask, **ask with the certain knowledge that he longs to give**; do not waver back and forth in fear and uncertainty like a fishing bobber tossed about on ocean waves for your **fear will obstruct your ability to receive** what he longs to give. Those **consumed by fear will not think they can receive anything from the Lord**; they are **unstable**, controlled by emotions, and can't make up their minds about anything. (James 1:6-8 Remedy)*

We need to understand that our **brain is designed to function** a certain way that determines the direction of our choices. **Subconsciously** we choose to **act like ourselves**, and we learn from our earliest interactions with others what that looks and feels like. The people **who raise us** are the first to **model to us** what it is like to live and how to relate to those around us. They are '**our people**' and **become the norm** for what it looks like to be a human. **Everything else will feel strange** and even **wrong**, despite how much access we may have to actual truth. Without the Spirit of God working in the heart, no one would even have interest in becoming different from how those around them act and live.

The **implanted Word** includes **truth** about **our identity**, and one of the most important aspects of this truth is coming to realize that as a **human being** we **cannot help but reflect** and act out whatever we **imagine God is like**, even if superficially we conclude there is no God. To be human by definition means being a **God-reflector**, for humanity is designed to image our Creator. I know I say this all the time, but it is central for coming to unlock our potential to **grow up in maturity** and move into living victoriously in a way that does **not involve fear as our motivation**. It is vital that we **believe the truth about God** as it is revealed through His Son Jesus Christ. This is why there is **no other way** to the Father but **through Jesus**, because **Jesus alone** is the only **flawless mirror image** of God's disposition and heart, and by focusing our attention and **saturating our imagination** with the **light of God reflected** in the life of Jesus, that light from The Word of God is the **power that saves**, transforms and **informs** us of **our true identity** as God reflectors and demonstrates what it means to act like ourselves.

This is the context that refutes and **dispels all the dark lies** about ourselves that **cause distortions** in our reflections of God as human beings. **Sin** is nothing less than **distorted reflections** of God, and until our **perceptions of God** are restored to **align with the actual truth** about God as **only love, truth and light** with no darkness at all in Him, **sin will continue** to retain a **stronghold in our mind** and we will **live in bondage** fueled by **fear of punishment**.

God Focus

*Who could bring a charge against God's chosen ones? **It is God who justifies**. Who is he who condemns? **It is Christ** who died, yes rather, who was **raised from the dead**, who is **at the right hand of God**, who also **makes intercession for us**. Who shall separate us from **the love of Christ**? (Romans 8:33-35a)*

Who is **doing** the **justifying** here? Is it **us**? Is it **Jesus**? How does this affect and **define intercession**?

Intercession – to entreat, to affect in order to attain or **secure an object** or end.

For us – over and above, beyond; causal, for the sake of, **instead of**, regarding; with the accusative case superior to, more than: exceeding, abundantly **above and beyond**, for the sake of, in stead of us.

We must **dispel every false assumption** that the purpose of Christ's intercession is to in some way affect the disposition of our heavenly Father about us. This is a lie from the pit of hell that has anchored the **spirit of fear** in billions of hearts, causing people to assume that God's heart towards us somehow differs from the love Christ demonstrates. Nothing could be further from the truth. **Jesus was not sent** to this world to do something to **change God's disposition** towards sinners, but **to reveal it**.

Jesus came to **reconcile us** to God, not the other way around. Jesus is not only our Christ, but **first and foremost He is God's Christ** – meaning His ultimate goal is to **vindicate His Father's honor** in all creation. **False religion** involves efforts to **appease divine entities** in order to **alleviate dissonance** that arises out of fear that we might have lost God's favor or His protection or provision for us. This is the **essence of paganism**, yet it has now **permeated Christianity** for hundreds of years and darkens our thinking about the **pure love the whole Godhead has for us** continually. This is the **dark veil Jesus came to remove** so that we could be restored to our **original design of basking in the love** of our heavenly family **free of fear, shame and condemnation**.

Notice that in so many of these powerful passages that unveils the true gospel, **it is God** who is actively **working through His Son** on our behalf, not the Son running interference for us to shield us from an angry deity.

For God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Paul likes to use Abraham as our example of the **kind of faith needed** in order to experience a satisfying **relationship** with God. The key is coming to appreciate **where the power** originates. In this description of Abraham's faith, where is the focus? Who is the primary **active agent**? This is critical to understand, for how we **perceive the context** of who does what between ourselves and God makes all the difference in **how we relate to temptation** and sin. And this all pivots around **perceived identity**.

Yet, looking to the promise of God, he didn't waver through unbelief, but grew strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Therefore it also was "reckoned to him for righteousness."

*Now it was not written that it was accounted to him for his sake alone, but for our sake also, to whom it will be accounted, who **believe in him who raised Jesus**, our Lord, from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was **raised for our justification**. (Romans 4:20-25)*

*Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death, that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection; **knowing this**, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin **might be done away with**, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him; **knowing that Christ**, being raised from the dead, **dies no more**. Death **no more has dominion** over him! For the death that he died, **he died to sin** one time; but the life that he lives, **he lives to God**. Thus consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but **alive to God in Christ Jesus** our Lord. (Romans 6:3-11)*

*In the same way, my friends, **you have died** to the law through the body of Christ, so that **you may belong to another**, to him who has been **raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God**. (Romans 7:4 NRSV)*

Away with any notion that Jesus is pleading to the Father to assuage His wrath against us. It is **not God who needs to alter His thinking** about us but **it is lies** that remain embedded in our psyche, planted there by the enemy that need to be **exposed and eradicated**, for they are like noxious weeds that **poison our soul** and **distort** our perceptions of God's attitude towards us.

*But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, **being now justified** by his blood, we will be **saved** from God's wrath through him. For if, **while we were enemies**, we were **reconciled to God** through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be **saved by his life**. Not only so, but we **also rejoice in God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have **now received the reconciliation**. (Romans 5:8-11)*

Any dissonance we experience from reading such passages alert us to **buried lies** deep inside **resistant to being exposed** by the Light who came to **reveal to us our loving Father** in heaven. Jesus did **not come to save us from God** but from sin. Note that this **begins** with the **emphasis on God** as the one **commending His own love**, not Jesus trying to induce more love from Him. Also it is important to know that **God's wrath is nothing like our wrath**, so we must divest ourselves of every notion about this so that the light of **truth may set our hearts free** from the bondage of fear and shame.

Overcoming Tied to Perceptions of God Context

Here is how we may **meet temptation effectively** in light of the **gospel** that **informs** us of both **God's true identity** as well as **our true identity** as children of God designed to reflect His glory.

Every temptation assaults this core truth, and every **temptation** has to **first get a foothold** inside us by getting us to **not believe the truth** about ourselves as God reflectors. As we realize this we **expose the hidden power trigger** of temptation and can **disarm it before** it gains **control over our will**. For every **temptation gains traction** by exploiting our **faulty presumptions** about our **true identity**. This is the brain function that always **subconsciously references** what we **believe about who we are** in order to determine **how to act like ourselves**.

Rather than continuing to pursue the path of **attempting to alter our actions** to avoid sinning, we must **address what we believe about ourselves** and **about God** as the precursor for **how we perceive the appeal** of any temptation. **Without a resonating context of lie-based beliefs** about our **identity** and God's, **temptation loses its power** over us and we **live free** from its ability to manipulate and fool us into **acting like a sinner**. What we believe about identity then is the **key to understanding why we act** the way we do, for our **brain will always** seek to make **choices to act like ourselves** and our people.

This is a way to succeed in **escaping the old patterns of thinking** and living. The **war is not against temptation** to sin but must be **directed against the lies** that distort our perceptions of **who we are** at our core that dictates what we assume about **how to like to act like ourselves**. When we **receive with humility the implanted Word of truth** from Jesus, and by faith we give Him alone **authority to define our identity** along with God's identity, then **in Christ** we may experience full **freedom from the power in the allure to sin**.

*The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**. But thanks be to **God, who gives us the victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:56-57)*

*For the death that he died, **he died to sin one time**; [past tense] but the life that he lives, **he lives to God**. [present tense] Thus **consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**. Therefore **don't let sin reign** in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but **present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God**. For **sin will not have dominion over you**. For you are **not under law, but under grace**.*

*What then? **Shall we sin**, because we are not under law, but under grace? May it **never be!** Don't you know that to whom you present yourselves as servants to obedience, his servants you are whom you obey; whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But **thanks be to God**, that, whereas **you were bondservants of sin, you became obedient from the heart** to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered. (Romans 6:10-17)*

For the **power of sin is derived from the law**, meaning we **perceive God as viewing** us through a **legal perspective** instead of a love perspective. To **not be under the law** has nothing to do with discarding the law of God, but has everything to do with **how we perceive the way God relates** to us and **views our identity** and worth. The **gospel** is the **revelation through Jesus** that the heart of **God is always for us**, not against us. The **gospel corrects** both our **perceptions of God's disposition** as well as restoring us to **live in continuous love** rather than continuous fear. **So long as we cling to legal views of God, temptation will have effective power to make us afraid, and fear of punishment supplies the power for the enemy to tempt us to doubt** God's perfect love, because **imposed punishment is never part of love**. So long as **fear is present**, the tendency to **react defensively** sets us up to sin, for **sin is rooted in unbelief** and doubts about the extent of love to never give up on us.

*Do all things **without murmurings and disputes**, that you may **become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish** in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are **seen as lights** in the world, **holding up the word of life**; that I may have something to boast in the day of Christ, that I didn't run in vain nor labor in vain.* (Philippians 2:14-16)

How does **murmuring or disputes** relate to being blameless, harmless and without blemish?

What is the underlying **cause of murmuring**? (**Unbelief** in God's constant care and love for us)

What are we **prone to dispute** the most? (The radical **claims of the Word** about our **identity**)

Can the implanted Word **dissolve the root cause** of murmuring? (Will we **believe it personally**?)

What could happen if we **stopped disputing or discounting** the validity of what the Word says?

(We would **stop blaming, hurting** others and live **free of distortions** in our reflection of God's heart)

***You are the light of the world.** A city located on a hill can't be hidden. Neither do you light a lamp, and put it under a measuring basket, but on a stand; and it shines to all who are in the house. Even so, **let your light shine** before men; that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** who is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:14-16)

How can we be the **light** of the world if **Jesus is the light**?

***The mystery** which has been hidden for ages and generations....has been revealed to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory;* (Colossians 1:26-27)

*But what does it say? "**The word is near you**, in your mouth, and in your heart;" that is, **the word of faith**, which we preach: that **if you will confess with your mouth** that Jesus is Lord, **and believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved**. For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed." (Romans 10:8-11)*

Once we receive with humility the **implanted Word**, its **fruit** will be **reflected** in our words and beliefs.

***What fruit** then did you have at that time in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of*

*those things is death. But **now, being made free from sin**, and having become servants of God, you have your **fruit of sanctification**, and the **result of eternal life**. For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**. (Romans 6:21-23)*

*Being therefore justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom we also have our **access by faith into this grace** in which we stand. **We rejoice in hope of the glory of God**. (Romans 5:1-2)*

***Being made free from sin**, you became **bondservants of righteousness**. (Romans 6:18)*

*For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him **we might become the righteousness of God**. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

We may now choose to **believe and embrace** this word of life – that we are **presently free** from sin. This is **not a goal** to strive towards but **a reality to embrace**, a **fact of our present identity** that when chosen in place of the familiar lies of the enemy in our feelings, will **release saving power** that **taps into the divine nature** and **sets us free experientially**.

*Grace to you and peace be **multiplied** in the **knowledge of God** and of Jesus our Lord, seeing that **his divine power** has **granted to us all things** that pertain to life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him** who called us by **his own glory and virtue**; by which he has granted to us his precious and **exceedingly great promises**; that **through** these you may **become partakers of the divine nature**, having **escaped from the corruption** that is in the world by lust.*

*Yes, and for this very cause **adding on your part all diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence; and in moral excellence, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control patience; and in patience godliness; and in godliness brotherly affection; and in brotherly affection, love. (This describes a chain sequence that when engaged leads us through the escape route out of corruption.) For if **these things are yours and abound**, they make you to be **not idle nor unfruitful** to the **knowledge of our Lord** Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is blind, **seeing only what is near**, having **forgotten the cleansing** from his old sins.*

*Therefore, brothers, **be more diligent** to make your calling and election sure. For **if you do these things, you will never stumble**. For thus you will be **richly supplied** with the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-11)*

Diligence is the **part we supply**, what God leaves up to us through **use of our own will**. Diligence involves **choosing to believe and act on truth presently**, regardless of feelings or circumstances. At **each step in this chain** of escape from darkness and distorted corruptions, our **choice** to again be **diligent opens access to the next step**. And the **power we access** with each **choice to believe and act** comes from tapping into **His divine nature** by **relying on His promises** implanted deep inside us that work transformation that saves our soul.

*For **it is God who works in you both to will and to work**, for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)*

Notice how this whole list is **bookended** by reference to the **knowledge of God and Christ**. Living in continual **awareness** and growing **appreciation of the revelation of God's heart** unfolded to us **through intimacy with Christ** is the incentive and empowerment that **enables us to keep moving**

ever deeper into a **secure attachment** with God's heart permanently.

Belief/faith comes **first as a choice**, meaning we **give priority to what God says** over any other.

We **first believe** what God says about **His love towards us**, regardless of our feelings or opinions.

We **then choose to believe** what God says about **our value and identity** regardless of our track record.

Like Abraham who despite all the evidence stacked against him, chose to **believe God's promise as more reliable** than his circumstances or feelings, we too may **embrace the implanted Word** of His *precious and exceedingly great promises* and be justified by His faith, for **His faithfulness** is immutable.

*But **this I call to mind**, and therefore **I have hope**: The **steadfast love of the LORD never ceases**, his **mercies never come to an end**; they are new every morning; **great is your faithfulness**. (Lamentations 3:21-23 NRSV)*

***This is the message** which we have heard from him and announce to you, that **God is light**, and in him is **no darkness at all**. (1 John 1:5)*

Caveat

There is a **warning** we must not ignore, of a very **real danger in resisting** this saving truth from the implanted word of God. If we continue to **cling to old familiar patterns** of thinking and theology, the **outcome** eventually will be **tragic** – and it will not be God's fault or choice but the natural result of **misuse of our own freedom** of choice.

*Having therefore, brothers, **boldness to enter into the holy place** by the blood of Jesus, by **the way which he dedicated for us**, a **new and living way**, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God, **let's draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith**, having our **hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience**, and having our body washed with pure water, let us **hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**; for **he who promised is faithful**.*

*Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. For **if we sin willfully** after we have **received the knowledge of the truth**, there remains **no more a sacrifice for sins**, but a **certain fearful expectation of judgment**, and a **fierceness of fire** which will **devour the adversaries**. (Hebrews 10:19-27)*

Note carefully what this is **saying** and is **not saying**. Living according to the Spirit of truth gives **boldness to enter** into the presence of powerful love **free of fear**. We dare to push into deep intimacy with the God of the universe, **not recklessly** but because our hearts and minds have been **renewed in the image** of the One we are coming to. We **confess our hope unwaveringly** – because **He is faithful** and we **cling to His words** and His promises, not any other criteria might lead us to try to sway God's thinking about us.

On the other hand, **if we remain double-minded** and allow old habit patterns of thinking and feelings remain entrenched in our heart, our **conscience remains infected** by lies about God and ourselves and is evil. Our conscience will actually **be manipulated** by the master accuser to **become our enemy**, and

when encountering the light of truth as revealed in Jesus and the presence of God, our **faulty context** will turn what is designed to produce **joy into torment**, for **all we can imagine** is **fear** and **consuming fire** because **our filters misinterpret** everything God says. It is **not God who threatens judgment** and devouring fire but **our diseased imagination** that we refused to have cleansed by the pure water of life. If we refuse and **resist the truth of God kindness**, graciousness, mercy and unconditional forgiveness, we **harden our own heart** instead of living from the heart God implants in us, and **a hardened heart cannot stand boldly** in the presence of undiluted passionate love.

*Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or **do you despise the riches of his kindness** and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that **God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance**? But by your **hard and impenitent heart** you are storing up wrath for [in] yourself on the day of wrath, when **God's righteous judgment will be revealed**. (Romans 2:3-5 NRSV)*

*Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and **welcome with meekness the implanted word** that has the power to save your souls. (James 1:21 NRSV)*

*For as the rain comes down and the snow from the sky, and doesn't return there, but waters the earth, and **makes it bring forth** and bud, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater; **so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth**: it shall **not return to me void**, but **it shall accomplish that which I please**, and it shall **prosper in the thing I sent it to do**. (Isaiah 55:10-11)*