

## Select Portions of the Psalms (Volume One)

Psalm 41:8: “[saying], A thing of ruin is poured out on him; and, He who lies down shall not rise again.” (LITV)

Psalm 41:8: “A thing of Belial is poured out on him, And because he lay down he riseth not again.” (YLT; Young’s Literal)

Psalm 41:8: “An evil disease, [say they], cleaveth fast unto him: and [now] that he lieth he shall rise up no more.” (KJV)

Psalm 41:8: “They say, A wicked thing is poured out on him, and he who lies down shall rise no more.” (MKJV)

My e-sword shows this transliteration of the Hebrew: “belîya’al.” Thus, Young’s translation of “a thing of Belial” is the most literal. Their neglect of us may be due to our belief of the gospel and our utter refusal to compromise in any area. Because we will not be moved, they might be slandering us by saying (or thinking), “An evil disease ... cleaveth fast unto him.” To them, our “evil disease” is uncompromising belief of the truth and so perhaps that is why they do not wish to come near us (neglect us).

“I have become a stranger to My brothers and a foreigner to My mother’s children. For the zeal of Your house has consumed Me; and the reproaches of the ones who reproach You have fallen on Me” (Psalm 69:8-9).

Another possible reason for neglect is that because of our belief of the gospel of Christ, we are now strangers and a foreigners to them. We are spiritual strangers and spiritual foreigners because we will not compromise by speaking peace when there is no peace (cf. 2 John 9-11). Our zeal for the Word of the cross (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17-18) brings a certain level of estrangement from unbelieving “Christians” and relatives. Of course, the level of estrangement can vary in degree, just as the level of hostility can vary in degree. The truth of the gospel does not always bring outward violence and hostility (e.g., oinking swine and snarling dogs). And there are times when there can still be a kind of “friendly” relationship among those

who believe the truth and those who do not. But what the truth of the gospel always brings is a sword; it necessarily divides. It always makes those on either side of the Sword of Truth enemies; it's just that not all enemies without exception are out to kill or physically harm us for what we believe.

“Because of this His people shall return here; and waters of a full [cup shall be] drained by them. And they say, How does God know? And, Is there knowledge in the Most High? (Psalm 73:10-11)

I think "His people" refers to ethnic (corporate) Israel, and not true spiritual Israel (i.e., the elect of God). Lord willing I will expound on this.

“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are of a pure heart. And [as for] me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps nearly made to slip. For I was jealous of the proud; I looked upon the peace of the wicked. For [there are] no pangs to their death; but their body [is] fat. They [are] not in the misery of mortal man; and with men they are not touched. So pride enchains them; violence covers them [like] a robe. Their eyes go out with fatness; they have passed the imaginations of the heart. They scoff and speak in evil; from on high they speak oppression. They set their mouth in the heavens; and their tongues walk through the earth” (Psalm 73:1-9).

The Psalmist says that God is good to Israel, to those who are pure of heart. Not all within Israel are pure in heart. Of course, “pure in heart” does not mean sinless in heart, but it does mean that there is a striking contrast between the ungodly and the pure in heart within Israel. Calvin on Psalm 73:9:

“Here it is declared that they utter their contumelious speeches as well against God as against men; for they imagine that nothing is too arduous for them to attempt, and flatter themselves that heaven and earth are

subject to them. If any should endeavor to alarm them by setting before them the power of God, they audaciously break through this barrier; and, with respect to men, they have no idea of any difficulty arising from such a quarter. Thus, there is no obstacle to repress their proud and vaunting speeches, but their tongue walketh through the whole earth” (John Calvin).

I think that given the context of verses 1-9, those who “scoff and speak evil” and “set their mouth in the heavens” are the pagans who are outside of the ethnic (corporate) people Israel. IF the correct interpretation is that verse 9 refers to pagans alone, then we see from verses 10-19 that ethnic (corporate) Israel are nevertheless lumped in the same category—namely, “ungodly.”

Thus it appears that by witnessing the seemingly “prosperous” lives of the wicked despite their proud and audacious speeches against the providence of God, many who profess faithful adherence to the God of Israel are made to stumble and end up joining hands with the pagan idolaters in their prideful rebellion against the Most High. A modern-day instance:

Many Calvinists would never “join hands” with the atheists by saying they agree with their contumelious and contemptuous speeches against God’s providence (e.g., so-called problem of sin/evil). But these Calvinists exhibit much greater deceit than the atheists by cloaking and clouding their audacious “speeches” (e.g., answers, sermons, writings, etc.) in “mystery.” Note this vain attempt by Machen to conceal his mutiny against God under the deceptive cloak of “reverence and humility.”

“Why He allowed sin to enter is the mystery of mysteries, but that He did so we are plainly told, and that He did so for some high and holy end” (J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian view of man*, p. 101).

Responses such as Machen's are commonplace among the Calvinist Reformed. When God's wisdom, love, justice, and righteousness are called into question by irreligious pagans, it is the ungodly Calvinists like Machen who concede their arguments by giving a dishonest answer. The atheist is right out in the open in his rebellion, while certain Calvinists more subtly rebel by appealing to "mystery" and "insolubility."

"How could a holy God, if He is all-powerful, have permitted the existence of sin? What shall we do with the problem? I am afraid we shall have to do with it something that is not very pleasing to our pride; I am afraid we shall just have to say that it is insoluble" (J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian view of man*, p. 45).

Obviously it is Machen who is pleasing his wicked pride and rebellion against the Most High by refusing to acknowledge what God has clearly revealed in Scripture concerning the demonstration of His power, wrath, justice, holiness, grace, love, and mercy in actively causing the entrance of sin into the world. Not only are the irreligious pagans setting their mouth against the heavens (Psalm 73:9), but so are those of J. Gresham Machen's mind. God has plainly revealed WHY He caused sin to enter. Machen calls God a liar by asserting that God has not revealed this "WHY" and therefore it is a "mystery of mysteries."

"Because of this His people shall return here; and waters of a full [cup shall be] drained by them. And they say, How does God know? And, Is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold! These are the ungodly who are always at ease; they increase their riches" (Psalm 73:10-12).

As seen above, it appears that “His people” refers to corporate Israel. But what of the phrase: “...shall return here”? Return where? Because, or on account of what has previously been stated in verses 1-9, His people “shall return here.” Matthew Poole comments:

“Return hither, or, turn hither, i.e. to this wicked company, or to their course” (Poole’s commentary on the whole Bible).

The phrase “cup shall be” is either italicized or bracketed, signifying that it is not found in the original language. I believe that “they” who say “How does God know?” and “Is there knowledge in the Most High” further confirms that “His people” are those Israel according to the flesh, not those Israel according to the promise (cf Romans 9:1-8). Calvin agrees in the main, but still leaves room for the presumptuous interpretation that true believers may emulate the ungodly (verse 12) who posed the two questions in verse 11:

“Some read the whole verse connectedly, thus: The people of God return hither, that they may drain full cups of the water of sorrow. But, in my opinion, this verse depends upon the preceding statements, and the sense is, That many who had been regarded as belonging to the people of God were carried away by this temptation, and were even shipwrecked and swallowed up by it. The prophet does not seem to speak here of the chosen people of God, but only to point to hypocrites and counterfeit Israelites who occupy a place in the Church. He declares that such persons are overwhelmed in destruction, because, being foolishly led away to envy the wicked, and to desire to follow them, they bid adieu to God and to all religion. Still, however, this might, without any impropriety, be referred to the chosen seed, many of whom are so violently harassed by this temptation, that they turn aside into crooked by-paths: not that they devote themselves to wickedness, but because they do not firmly persevere in the

right path. The sense then will be, that not only the herd of the profane, but even true believers, who have determined to serve God, are tempted with this unlawful and perverse envy and emulation” (John Calvin).

In contrast to Calvin’s admission of a possible interpretation of the passage referring to the chosen seed, Poole states:

“Those wicked ones, whose words and actions he hath been hitherto describing, or the people confederate with them. For these and such-like opinions are oft ascribed to the wicked in Scripture, but never, as far as I know; to any good man. And Job, though he used many intemperate speeches, and though some such expressions as this were charged upon him by his friends, as Job 23:13, yet he utterly disowned them. Is there knowledge in the Most High? seeing these cursed and impudent blasphemers of God, and enemies of all goodness, are crowned with so many blessings, how is it credible that there is a God who sees and orders the affairs of this lower world? for if God did know these things, certainly he neither could nor would suffer them to be thus managed” (Poole’s commentary on the whole Bible).

As for these “waters” being “drained by them” I’m not sure. However, I did think of this passage in light of it:

“And I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the Sea. And all were baptized to Moses in the cloud, and in the Sea, and all ate the same spiritual food. And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the spiritual rock following, and that Rock was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, ‘for they were scattered in the deserted place.’ But these things became examples for us, so that we may not be lusters after evil, even as

those indeed lusted. Neither be idolaters, even as some of them, as it has been written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' Nor should we commit fornication, as some of them fornicated, and twenty three thousand fell in one day. Neither test Christ, as some of them tried Him, and perished by serpents. Neither should you murmur, as also some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. And all these things happened to those as examples, and it was written for our warning, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:1-11).

ALL Israel ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink but only SOME Israel were among the remnant, "the children of the promise" (Romans 9:8). The wicked within Israel experienced things like water and food, but unlike the righteous within Israel, these wicked despised God's provision:

"He split the rocks in the wilderness and made them drink, as from great floods. And He brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to go down like rivers. Yet they sinned still more against Him, to provoke the Most High in the desert. And they tested God in their heart, by asking food for their souls. And they spoke against God, saying, Shall God be able to set a table in the wilderness? Behold! He struck the rock and the waters gushed out, and the torrents were overflowing. Can He also give bread? Will He provide flesh for His people? So Jehovah heard and He passed over, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and also anger went up against Israel, because they did not believe in God and trusted not in His salvation. And He commanded the fine clouds above; and He opened the doors of the heavens; and He rained on them manna to eat; yea, He gave the grain of the heavens to them. Man ate the bread of the mighty; He sent them food to the full. He made an east wind blow in the heavens; and He led out the south wind by His power. Yea, He rained flesh on them like dust, and winged birds as the sand of the seas. And He made them fall amidst their camp, all around to their tents. They ate and were filled full; for their own

lust He brought to them. They were not estranged from their lust; their food was still in their mouths, and God's wrath came on them and killed the fattest of them; and He struck down the choice ones of Israel" (Psalm 78:15-31).

God gives them water and they say, can He provide bread? God provides bread (i.e., manna) and they ask, can He provide flesh? He provides flesh and then strikes them dead in His wrath while the flesh was yet between their teeth:

"And the mixed multitude among them lusted with a great lust; and the sons of Israel also turned back and wept, and said, Who shall cause us to eat flesh? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; and now our soul withers. There is nothing except this manna before our eyes. And the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like the appearance of bdellium resin gum. And the people went around and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in a pan, and made it into cakes. And its taste was like the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew came down on the camp by night, the manna came down on it. And Moses heard the people weeping by its families, each at the door of his tent; and the anger of Jehovah glowed exceedingly, and in the eyes of Moses it was evil...And a wind went forth from Jehovah and cut off quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as a day's journey here, and as a day's journey there, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the land. And the people rose up all that day, and all that night, and the day after, and gathered the quails; he who had least had gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves around the camp. The flesh was yet between their teeth, it was not yet cut off, and the anger of Jehovah glowed among the people. And Jehovah struck among the people with a very great plague. And one called the name of that place, The Graves of Lust; for there they buried the people

who lusted. From the Graves of Lust the people pulled up stakes to go to Hazeroth, and they remained in Hazeroth” (Numbers 11:4-10, 31-35).

In short, I think that “His people” are those who profess to believe in the true God of Israel but who later make shipwreck of this profession by observing the seeming “blessings” upon the rebellious wicked and so begin to reveal their discontent and contempt of His provision. Those wicked Israelites who exposed their rebellious attitude in Psalm 73:11 are equated with the other wicked persons in Psalm 73:9. The true spiritual Israelites do not stumble, and do realize that the “prosperous wicked” are being deliberately set in slippery places that they may be cast down to destruction (Psalm 73:18). Also, the aforementioned Scripture passages (from Numbers 11, Psalm 78, and 1 Corinthians 10) are a good commentary or exposition on Psalm 73:1-12.

When we apply all of this to our modern-day situation, we see how many Calvinists who profess to have faith in the true God end up giving essential agreement in their theology with the irreligious pagans. So, it is not only the atheists, agnostics, and Arminians who are “speaking against the heavens” (Psalm 73:9), it is also the Calvinists. All of them are heading the charge against the Lord and against His Anointed by their shameful mutiny (cf. Psalm 2:1-3). Machen is a salient case in point among these contumacious Calvinists. Machen’s views embody and epitomize the views of most who are in the camp of conservative Calvinism, so to expose him is to expose all those who believe like him.

“Why have the nations raged and the peoples are meditating on vanity? The kings of the earth set themselves; yea, the rulers have plotted together against Jehovah and His Anointed, [saying,] We will break their bands in two, and throw off their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall mock at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger, and He will terrify them in His wrath; Yea, I have set My king on My holy mount on Zion” (Psalm 2:1-6).

Regarding “we will break their bands” portion, John Calvin writes:

“This is a prosopopoeia, in which the prophet introduces his enemies as speaking; and he employs this figure the better to express their ungodly and traitorous design. Not that they openly avowed themselves rebels against God, (for they rather covered their rebellion under every possible pretext, and presumptuously boasted of having God on their side.”

Multitudes of professing Christians employ every conceivable pretext and pseudo-pious platitude to conceal their ultimate rebellion against Jehovah and His Anointed.

“Woe to him who fights with the One who formed him! A potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to its former, What are you making? Or does your work say, He has no hands?” (Isaiah 45:9)

These proud and pretentious potsherds of the earth, pontificate ponderous problems with predestination. From the CCF (Christian Confession of Faith):

Predestination

## 1. Election

- a. In eternity past, God the Father covenanted with God the Son, Jesus Christ, to glorify Himself by saving a particular, elect people, and those only, from the guilt and defilement of sin, by the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. [Psa 89:19-37; Isa 49:5-6; 53:11-12; Luk 22:29; Joh 6:37-40; 10:29; 17:2,9; Gal 3:16-18; 2Ti 1:9]
  
- b. In covenanting with Jesus Christ, God the Father covenanted with all the elect in Jesus Christ, to be their God and to reveal His divine love, mercy, grace, and wisdom to them by saving them through the work of Jesus Christ their Redeemer. [Gen 13:14-16; 17:4-8,19; Deu 4:35; 7:9; 2Sa 23:5; Psa 65:4; 67:2; 105:8-10; 111:9; 132:11; Isa 43:10-12; 55:3-4; 61:6-9; Mat 13:11; Mat 24:22,24,31; Mar 13:20,22,27; Luk 1:68-75; 18:7; Joh 17:2-3; Act 13:48; Rom 8:28-30,33; 9:11-16,23; 11:26-27; Eph 1:4-14; Col 3:12; 2Th 2:13; 2Ti 2:10; Tit 1:1; Heb 6:13-14; 8:6-12; 1Pe 1:1; 2:9]
  
- c. Further, as part of the terms of this covenant, the Father decreed to send the Holy Spirit to indwell His elect people. [Isa 44:3-4; 59:21; Eze 36:27; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13-14; 1Pe 1:2]
  
- d. When Scripture speaks of God's covenant, it does not mean a conditional agreement or contract between two parties; rather, it means a bond of friendship and fellowship that is unilaterally enacted by God. [Gen 15:12-21; Lev 26:44-45; Deu 4:31; 7:6-8; Jdg 2:1; 2Ch 13:5; Psa 89:3; Isa 54:10; 55:5; Heb 6:17-18; 8:10]

e. The exact number of the elect is known only to God Himself; it cannot be increased or diminished. The elect of God are scattered among every tribe, nation, and language on earth. [Deu 29:29; Joh 6:37-39; 10:14; 17:9, 2Ti 2:19; Rev 7:9]

f. This election was not owing to any merits in those elected or conditions they would meet, whether foreknown or foreordained, but only to the free grace and goodness of God alone. When Scripture speaks of God's foreknowledge, it is not speaking of a prior knowledge of men's actions (although God had such knowledge) but a love for their persons. [Deu 7:7-8; Isa 65:1; Eze 36:22-32; Rom 8:29; 9:11,16; 10:20; 1Co 1:25-29; Eph 1:11; 2Ti 1:9]

## 2. Reprobation

a. In eternity past, God (in order to more fully reveal to the elect His saving love towards them) purposed to create a people for displaying His power, wrath, and hatred of sin and unbelief. [Exo 9:14-16; Psa 73:17-18; Pro 16:4; Jer 6:28-30; Hab 1:6-11; Rom 9:17,21-23; 1Pe 2:8]

b. Every person without exception is either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath. There is no one about whom God is undecided. [Isa 45:23; Rom 9:22-23; 14:11]

c. The Father determined to include the elect and the reprobate in one common fall, that they should be equally ruined and undone, equally guilty and defiled, and equally in need of a righteousness that neither could produce on their own. [Rom 3:9-12,23; 5:12-14; Eph 2:3]

d. God actively causes the reprobate to hate His glory, persecute His people, and oppose His gospel, that He may justly punish them. [Exo 7:3; 9:12; Jos 11:20; 1Sa 2:25; Psa 105:25; Rom 9:18; Rev 17:17]

e. God does not have any love toward the reprobate or any desire to save them, for God does not show love at the expense of His justice. The good things that God gives to them in this life lead only to their destruction, increasing their guilt for their thanklessness to God. Jesus Christ did not die for the reprobate in any sense, and they do not benefit in any sense from His death. Scripture, in speaking of God's love for "all men" and "the world" is not speaking of all men without exception. Rather, these words refer to God's love for all men without distinction – that is, regardless of their nationality or status. [Psa 2:4-5; 5:5-6; 11:5; 73:11-12; 92:7; Pro 3:32-33; 11:20; 12:2; 16:4-5; 17:15; Joh 3:16; 15:22; 17:9; Rom 9:13; 1Ti 2:4; 1Pe 2:8; 1Jo 2:2; 4:10]

f. God uses the preaching of the gospel as a special means of hardening the reprobate. [Isa 6:9-12; Mat 13:13-15; Mar 4:11-12; 2Co 2:14-16]

g. Contrary to the aspersions of the enemies of God, this doctrine of reprobation does not make believers exalt themselves over other men; instead, it humbles them and causes them to tremble before Almighty God, thankful that He has graciously numbered them among the elect rather than the reprobate. [Rom 9:15-16,23,29; 1Co 4:7; 2Th 2:11-13]

“He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal craftily with His servants” (Psalm 105:25).

God turned their heart to hate His people and to deal craftily with His servants. Is it sin, is it wicked, to hate and deal craftily with God’s people? Of course it is. Thus, God turned their heart to sin. What does it mean to turn someone’s heart? In Hebrew, it is an active bending, making, fashioning, forging, causing, and producing. There is no getting around what this verse is saying. God actively made their hearts to think wicked things and then made them do wicked things. And God did not just “leave” them or “permit” them to think and do anything. He made them think and do particular things, particular sins. As seen later in the Psalm, He did this to show forth His power in His wondrous and marvelous works so He would get all the praise and the glory and so His people would worship Him and obey Him

“But his delight is only in the Law of Jehovah, and he meditates in His Law day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

The popular Puritan heretic Thomas Watson writes concerning a particular portion of Psalm 1:

“As the book of Canticles is called the Song of Songs by an Hebraism, it being the most excellent; so this psalm may not unfitly be entitled, the Psalm of Psalms, for it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of Christianity” (The Saint’s Spiritual Delight).

And within God’s law which we meditate upon, is found the very heart, the very life-blood of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without the efficacious Atonement of Jesus Christ there is no gospel of Christ. And without the gospel of Christ there is no Christianity.

I received a good and thoughtful response to this:

“I totally agree with you about the Gospel, and the efficacious atonement of Christ, being found in the law of God. But, contrary to what Watson wrote it is the Gospel itself that is the ‘pith and quintessence of Christianity’, not the meditating on, and delighting in, God’s Law. Based on that standard alone, Watson could not condemn the Pharisees, who meditated on God’s Law almost continuously, and claimed to find all their delight there.

If Watson is looking for a ‘Psalm of Psalms’, that contains ‘the very pith and quintessence of Christianity’, I would suggest Psalm 32:

'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.'

Clearly, Paul considered this Psalm to be ‘the very pith and quintessence of Christianity’ when he wrote Romans ch. 4.”

“Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the seat of scorers. But his delight is only in the Law of Jehovah, and he meditates in His Law day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2).

The blessed man is NOT to take nor give anti-Biblical advice or council. Thomas Watson [1] expounds on what it means to “sit” in the seat of scorers:

“Sitting implies familiarity with sinners, Psalm 26.4. ‘I have not sat with vain people;’ that is, I do not haunt their company. The godly man shakes off all intimacy with the wicked. He may traffic with them — but not associate with them. He may be civil to them, as neighbors —but not twist into a cord of friendship. Diamonds and stones may lie together, but they will not solder and cement” (The Saint’s Spiritual Delight).

[[1] My quoting of Watson does not mean I consider him a true believer.]

The words of Watson (e.g., traffic, associate, civility, familiarity, friendship, lie together, solder and cement, intimacy) may be defined differently by different people, and have different and various applications. The godly man may have ungodly “friends” and “associates” in such a way that does not contradict passages like (and related to) the following:

“I wrote to you in the letter not to associate with fornicators; and not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or with plunderers, or with idolaters, since then you must go out of the world. But now I wrote to you not to associate intimately; if anyone is called a brother and is either a fornicator, or a covetous one, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a plunderer, with such a one not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, then, purposes to be a friend of the world is put down as hostile to God” (James 4:4).

There is a sense in which a true believer may be “familiar with” or “a friend to” the scorner. There are many ways to interact and engage with the wicked scorner WITHOUT sitting in the scorner’s chair.

A personal and autobiographical example of associations with my ungodly and unbelieving biological family. There is a kind of familial affection and intimacy between us. This familial “affection” and “intimacy” is not opposed to James 4:4. The sword of gospel-truth has been so deftly and deeply driven between us that any surface-level-affection shown to me on their parts has lurking beneath it a combination of cordiality, civility, veiled animosity, and a degree of estrangement. This is not a special case. I do not say it because I am special. Mine is not an anomaly of Christian experience. As many of my brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus are so acutely aware.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a bride against her mother-in-law. [Ones] hostile [to] the man [shall be] those of his [own] house. The [one] loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the [one] loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. The [one] finding his life shall lose it. And the [one] losing his life on account of Me shall find it. The [one] receiving you receives Me, and the [one] receiving Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matthew 10:34-40).

We will not cower in the face of adversity. We will not back nor bow down to the familial or friendly face of compromise. Our quiver is full of sharp gospel-arrows. Bows are bent. At the ready. Faces set like flint. We are steady (Isaiah 50:7). Feet shod with the gospel of peace. True gospel knowledge zeal like that of a hurricane. Awaiting the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5), we preach the gospel and strive to make it plain.

“They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His Word” (Psalm 106:24; cf. Numbers 14).

Matthew Poole writes concerning Psalm 106:24:

“preferring Egypt and the former bondage before it, Num\_14:3,4, and not thinking it worthy of a little hazard and difficulty in taking the possession of it.”

Some who initially professed the true gospel are like unto one who is very pliable. I'd rather deal with an obstinate atheist than a pliable and wishy-washy professor of the true gospel who despises the birthright and pleasant land.

“Eagerly pursue peace and holiness with all, without which no one will see the Lord, watching diligently that not any lack from the grace of God, that and through this many be defiled; that not any fornicator, or profane one, as Esau, who for one meal gave up his birthright; for you know also that afterwards desiring to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, although seeking it out with tears” (Hebrews 12:14-17).

If the profane one cannot have this one precious and transient meal he will starve to death (or so he thinks). But recall Esau's indifference after sating his appetite with a mess of pottage.

“And Jacob boiled soup. And Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Please let me eat of the red, this red soup, for I am faint. On account of this his name is called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell

me your birthright today. And Esau said, Behold, I am going to die, and what good is this, a birthright to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me today. And he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave bread and soup of lentils to Esau. And he ate and drank, and rose up and left. And Esau despised the birthright” (Genesis 25:29-34).

“Praise Jehovah! Praise God in His holy place; praise Him in the expanse of His might. Praise Him in His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the harp and lyre. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with strings and pipes. Praise Him on the sounding cymbals; praise Him with the resounding cymbals. Let everything that breathes praise Jehovah. Praise Jehovah!” (Psalm 150:1-6).

Praise Him in His mighty act of regeneration through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

“I also do not cease giving thanks on your behalf, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your mind having been enlightened, for you to know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead; yea, He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and lordship, and every name having been named, not only in this age, but also in the coming age; and He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the assembly” (Ephesians 1:16-22).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He according to His great mercy having regenerated us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in Heaven for you the ones in the power of God being guarded through faith to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; in which you exult; yet a little while, if need be, grieving in manifold trials, so that the proving of your faith, much more precious than perishing gold, but having been proved through fire, may be

found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you exult with joy unspeakable and being glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:3-9).

“Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the exaltation of God be in their throat, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with iron bands; to execute on them the judgment written; this is an honor for all His saints. Praise Jehovah!” (Psalm 149:5-9)

A few verses come to mind:

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy of small judgments? Do you not know that we shall judge angels, not to speak of this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

“For, behold, the day is coming, burning like a fire pot; and all the proud and every doer of wickedness shall be chaff. And the coming day will set them ablaze, says Jehovah of Hosts, which will not leave root or branches to them. But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall rise up, and healing will be on His wings. And you shall go out and frisk like calves of the stall. And you shall tread under the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day which I am preparing, says Jehovah of Hosts. Remember the Law of My servant Moses which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and judgments. Behold, I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Jehovah” (Malachi 4:1-5).

“And the seventh from Adam, Enoch, also prophesied to these men, saying, Behold, the Lord came with myriads of His saints, to do judgment against all, and to rebuke all the ungodly of them concerning all their ungodly works which they ungodly did, and concerning all the hard things ungodly sinners spoke against Him” (Jude 1:14-15).

“Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One adorned in His clothing, bending in His great power? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save! Why is Your clothing red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress, I alone, and no man of the peoples was with Me. And I will tread them in My anger, and trample them in My fury; and their juice shall be spattered on My garments; and I will pollute all My clothes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. And I looked, and no one was helping. And I wondered that no one was upholding. Then My own arm saved for Me, and My fury upheld Me. And I tread down peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My fury. And I poured their juice to the earth. I will mention the mercies of Jehovah, the praises of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah has benefited us, and the great good to the house of Israel, by which He benefited them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindness” (Isaiah 63:1-7).

“And indeed every priest stands day by day ministering, and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But He, offering but one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, from then on expecting until His enemies are placed as a footstool of His feet. For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified. ... Therefore, brothers, having confidence for the entering of the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, which He consecrated for us, a new and living way through the veil; that is, His flesh” (Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-20).

“Let them praise the name of Jehovah; for He commanded, and they were created” (Psalm 148:5).

The universal atonement heretic, John Calvin writes on this passage:

“He says emphatically — for He Himself created, intimating that the world is not eternal, as wicked men conjecture, nor made by a concourse of atoms, but that this fair order of things which we see, suddenly sprang forth upon the commandment of God.”

Chestertonian Calvinist heretic Douglas Wilson writes:

“It may appear to the casual observer that a few years ago someone gave a signal and a new wave of militant atheists began publishing books like crazy. These books contain many or most of the standard arguments against God, but something is different. The zeal, militancy, and the underlying sense of panic indicate some kind of sea of change in the relationship between believers and unbelievers.

I believe it is necessary to answer the challenges, but it is also necessary to resist the temptation to be shrill in response. The issues are important, but no sense getting really worked up over it. If we were all sitting on a used car lot, and one of the F-250 trucks began questioning the existence of Henry Ford, we would all think it was a serious situation, but that is not the same thing as thinking it a serious question” (Douglas Wilson, God Is).

God the Holy Spirit speaks through the Psalmist:

“He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who chastises the nations, shall He not punish, He who teaches man knowledge? Jehovah knows the thoughts of man, that they are a mist. Blessed is the man You chasten, O Jehovah, You teach him out of Your Law; to give him rest from troubled days, until the pit is dug for the wicked” (Psalm 94:9-13).

Calvinists who believe that God has a permissive will or decree lack the spiritual sight, sense, and sound mind to “see” that their partially-sovereign idol does not truly SEE because he does not truly DECREE.

“He takes no delight in the strength of the horse, nor any pleasure in the legs of a man. Jehovah takes pleasure in those who fear Him, those who hope in His mercy” (Psalm 147:10-11).

John Calvin comments on these verses (not an endorsement of Calvin as a true Christian; but his commentaries are quite helpful):

“After the Psalmist has shown that there is proof of the divine goodness in every part of the world, he takes particular notice that men have no strength but what is given them from above, and this he adds with the express purpose of checking the pride by which almost all men are inflamed, and which leads them to trust in their own strength. The meaning of the passage is, that let man come in the preparation of his own strength, and with all the assistance’s that seem to him most prevalent, this will only issue in smoke and vanity; nay, that in arrogating the very least to himself, this will only be a hindrance in the way of the mercy of God, by which alone we stand. The strength of the horse is mentioned by synecdoche to denote

any kind of protection. Not that God is displeased with those things in themselves considered which he has given us as helps, but it is necessary that we be withdrawn from a false confidence in them, for very commonly when any resource is at hand, we are foolishly intoxicated and lifted up with pride. He opposes the fear of God therefore to the strength both of men and of horses, and places his hope in his mercy, intimating that it is highly incumbent upon us to show our moderation in worshipping God with reverence and holiness, and depending upon his grace. Hence we learn that he only condemns that strength which would take from God the honor due to him” (John Calvin).

“Praise Jehovah; praise Jehovah, O my soul. While I live I will praise Jehovah; I will sing praises to my God while I have being. Put not your trust in nobles, in a son of man, for there is no salvation in him. His breath will go out, he returns to the earth; his thoughts perish in that day. Blessed is he who has the God of Jacob in his help; his hope is on Jehovah his God” (Psalm 146:1-5).

The NKJV translates verse 4b: “In that very day his plans perish.” The Psalmist describes how the hot air of hauteur is rapidly released from man’s boisterous balloon. Similarly, the apostle James speaks to the careless and presumptuous boast of business, travel, and day-to-day life maintenance:

“Come now, those saying, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and we will spend one year there, and we will trade and will make a profit, who do not know of the morrow. For what is your life? For it is a mist, which for a little while appears, and then disappears. Instead of you saying, If the Lord wills, even we will live, and we will do this or that; but now you boast in your presumptions. All such boasting is evil” (James 4:13-16).

And another related Scripture that highlights the hubris of misplaced trust, inordinate focus on self, and covetousness:

“And one from the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But He said to him, Man, who appointed Me a judge or a divider over you? And He said to them, Beware, and keep back from covetousness; for one’s life is not in the abundance of the things which are his. And He spoke a parable to them, saying, A certain rich man produced well from the land. And he reasoned within himself, saying, What may I do, for I have nowhere I may gather my fruits? And he said, I will do this; I will tear down my barns and I will build larger; and I will gather there all my

produce and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take rest, eat, drink, and be glad. But God said to him, Fool! This night they demand your soul from you; and that which you prepared, to whom will it be? So is he treasuring up for himself, and not being rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21).

“Jehovah is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall thank You, O Jehovah; and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your might; to make Your might known to the sons of men; yea, the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is a kingdom to all eternities; and Your rule in all, generation and generation. Jehovah upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all hope to You; and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Jehovah is righteous in all His ways, and kind in all His works. Jehovah is near to all who call on Him, to all those who call on Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of the ones who fear Him; and He will hear their cry and save them. Jehovah watches over all who love Him; but He destroys all the wicked. My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah; and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:9-21).

Are His tender mercies over all His works without exception? Were the tender mercies of Jehovah over Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Exodus? What saith the Scripture?

“And Jehovah said to Moses, See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh; and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh. And he will send away the sons of Israel from his land. And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh. And I will multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh will not listen to you. And I will put My hand on Egypt, and will bring My armies, My people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt with great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah when I send forth My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst” (Exodus 7:1-5).

“And Jehovah said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart heavy and the heart of his servants, so that I may set these signs of Mine in their midst; and so that you may recount in the ears of your son and the

son of your son what I exerted Myself to do against Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, and you may know that I am Jehovah” (Exodus 10:1-2).

Clearly God’s purpose was to demonstrate His wrath in Pharaoh and make His power known that He might make known His redemptive riches to Moses and Israel. In spite of this clarity there are Open Theist, God-hating idolaters who say that God was seeking

“... the salvation of Pharaoh even though he was brutally oppressing the people of Israel...Yahweh, the God of Israel, wanted Pharaoh and the Egyptian people to experience his truth and life-giving grace” (John Sanders, No Other Name, p. 134).

John Sanders’ eisegetical darkness is a darkness which can be felt.

Psalm 145 states that “Jehovah watches over all who love Him; but He destroys all the wicked.” What makes the difference here? The precious blood of propitiation. Praise God that Jesus Christ is our Passover.

“You know that the Passover is coming after two days, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified” (Matthew 26:2).

“And before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should move from this world to the Father, loving His own in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1).

“Then purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For also Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

“By faith he made the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, that the one destroying the first-born might not touch them” (Hebrews 11:28).

“And I will pass through in the land of Egypt in this night. And I will strike every first-born in the land of Egypt, from man even to livestock. And I will execute judgments on all the gods of Egypt. I am Jehovah! And the blood shall be a sign to you, on the houses where you are. And I will see the blood, and I will pass over you. And the plague shall not be on you to destroy, when I strike in the land of Egypt. And the day shall be a memorial for you. And you shall celebrate it as a feast to Jehovah, for your generations. You shall celebrate it as a law forever” (Exodus 12:12-14).

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and giving thanks, He broke and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken on behalf of you; this do in remembrance of Me. In the same way the cup also, after supping, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; as often as you drink, do this in remembrance of Me. For as often as you may eat this bread, and drink this cup, you solemnly proclaim the death of the Lord, until He shall come” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The efficacious blood of Jesus Christ is a sign to all true believers. All true believers know and believe that Christ’s blood is truly a Passover indeed. Those who believe that this “passover blood” was shed for everyone without exception have not faith in Christ’s blood as propitiation (cf. Romans 3:25). A true Christian comments regarding the Good News of

particular, efficacious redemption witnessed in the Passover:

“In our family devotions this evening we talked about the Passover, and I was reminded again at how vivid a picture of particular redemption that is. It’s the blood that makes the difference! The blood was not on the houses of the Egyptians. Just think of a 'passover' in which the blood was on everyone’s house without exception, and a 'god' who would kill the firstborn in some of the houses on which there was blood. In this 'passover,' the blood itself wouldn’t make the difference between which houses were passed over and which houses were condemned. There would have to be one of two things going on:

Either this god thinks the blood has no importance and just condemns at random, or this god finds something good in some of the houses with blood on them as compared to other houses with blood on them, thus not basing his passing over on the blood at all but on something in the households themselves. Then the question must be asked, 'Well, why would the blood on the house be needed at all, since it doesn’t make the difference between being passed over and being condemned?' The answer is, 'The blood wouldn’t be needed at all. The blood itself is without value.'”

Praise God for THE BLOOD OF HIS DEAR SON! It is of infinite value! When God sees the blood applied to His people, THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION! Christ’s obedience unto death, the blood of His cross, is the ONLY thing that makes the difference between heaven and hell, between salvation and damnation!

“Man is like to vanity; his days are like a shadow that passes” (Psalm 144:4).

My mind recently has been reinforced, not only with the truth that man is like to a vaporous vanity and a shadow that passes, but also that youth, strength, vigor, and prime of life comprise one big bundle of vanity:

“So then remove vexation from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh. For childhood and prime of life are vanity” (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

The sober, considerate, and wise conclusion set forth in Ecclesiastes:

“The Preacher sought to find out pleasing words, and words of truth written on uprightness. The words of the wise are as goads; yea, as nails driven by the masters of collections, they are given from one Shepherd. And more than these, my son, be warned: The making of many books has no end, and much study is the weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this applies to every man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with all that is hidden, whether it is good, or whether it is evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:10-14).

“Rescue me and deliver me from the foreigners’ sons, those whose mouths have spoken vanity; and their right hand is a right hand of lies; so that our sons may be like plants grown up in their youth; and our daughters like corner-stones, hewn like a palace building; and our storehouses may be full, furnishing kind to kind; our flocks may breed thousands and ten thousands outside, our oxen laden; there is no break and no going out, and no crying in our plazas. Blessed are the peoples that are so; blessed are the peoples whose God is Jehovah!” (Psalm 144:11-15).

Praise God’s causing plants and pillars to stand firm and erect.

For the zeitgeist woos dithering dromedaries to a decisive defect.

Keep waiting and praying that the unregenerate elect would reflect.

And cease being tossed with everything antithetical to the cross.

“Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly a true seed. How then have you turned into the deviant shoots of an alien vine to Me? Though you wash yourself with potash, and multiply soap for yourself, your iniquity is stained before Me, declares the Lord Jehovah. How can you say, I am not defiled; I have not gone after Baals? See your way in the valley; know what you have done! You are a swift camel criss-crossing her ways; a wild ass used to the wilderness. In the passion of her desire she snuffs up the wind in her time. Who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not tire themselves; in her month they will find her. Withhold your foot from being bare and your throat from thirst. But you said, It is hopeless! For I love strangers, and after them I will go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed. They, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets are saying to a tree, You are my father; and to a stone, You gave us birth. For they turned their back to Me, and not the face. But in the time of their evil, they will say, Arise, and save us! But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your evil; for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah” (Jeremiah 2:21-28).

“I have blotted out your transgressions like a thick cloud; and your sins like a cloud. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22).

Praise God if the storehouse is full; and praise God if there is only dust.

For our faith, hope, and love is in Christ; not in what feeds moth and rust.

“Though the fig tree shall not blossom, and fruit is not on the vines; the work of the olive fails, and the fields make no food; the flock is cut off from the fold, and no herd is in the stalls, yet I will exult in Jehovah; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. Jehovah the Lord is my might, and He sets my feet like hinds’ feet, and He will make me to walk on my high places” (Hebrews 3:17-19).

“For also you suffered together in my bonds; and you accepted the seizure of your possessions with joy, knowing yourselves to have a better and abiding possession in Heaven” (Hebrews 10:34).

“Do not treasure up for you treasures on the earth, where moth and rust cause to perish, and where thieves dig through and steal. But treasure up for you treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust cause to perish, and where thieves do not dig through and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

“Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God; Your Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. O Jehovah, because of Your name, enliven me; in Your righteousness, bring my soul out of distress. And in Your mercy cut off my enemies; and exterminate all those who distress my soul; for I am Your servant” (Psalm 143:10-12).

Ultimately the land of uprightness is having the distress of indwelling sin completely eradicated upon seeing Christ in His glory. And while remaining here on earth we, with the help of His good Spirit, press toward perfection:

“But, no, rather I also count all things to be loss because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them to be trash, that I might gain Christ and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness of Law, but through the faith of Christ, having the righteousness of God on faith, to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, having been conformed to His death, if somehow I may attain to a resurrection out of the dead. Not that I already received or already have been perfected, but I press on, if I also may lay hold, inasmuch as I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not count myself to have laid hold, but one thing I do, forgetting the things behind, and stretching forward to those things before, I press on after a mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8-14).

David prays “...in Your mercy cut off my enemies; and exterminate all those who distress my soul; for I am Your servant.”

A clear token of Fatherly mercy is God taking vengeance on and exterminating all those who distress the souls of true Christ-lovers:

“Brothers, we are bound to give thanks to God always concerning you, even as it is right, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of each one of you multiplies toward one another, so as for us to boast ourselves in you in the assemblies of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and the afflictions which you endure, a clear token of the just judgment of God, for you to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed suffer; since it is a just thing with God to pay back tribulation to the ones troubling you, and to give you, those being afflicted, relief with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire giving full vengeance to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will pay the penalty: everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength, when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe in that Day, because our testimony to you was believed. For which we also continually pray concerning you, that our God would deem you worthy of the calling, and would fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and work of faith in power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12).

“Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One adorned in His clothing, bending in His great power? It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save! Why is Your clothing red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress, I alone, and no man of the peoples was with Me. And I will tread them in My anger, and trample them in My fury; and their juice shall be spattered on My garments; and I will pollute all My clothes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come” (Isaiah 63:1-4).

For the day of vengeance is in His heart, and the year of His redeemed

has come. May true believers in Jesus Christ meditate on that truly awesome and humbling contrast.

“Bring my soul out from prison to give thanks to Your name; the righteous shall gather around me; for You shall deal bountifully with me” (Psalm 142:7).

This Psalm calls to mind these Psalms:

“And call on Me in the day of distress, and I will save you; and you shall glorify Me” (Psalm 50:15).

“But let all who put their trust in You rejoice; let them shout for joy forever, because You cover them. And let those who love Your name be joyful in You” (Psalm 5:11).

“O Jehovah, set a guard to my mouth; keep watch on the door of my lips. Do not let my heart turn aside to any evil thing, to practice deeds in wickedness with men who practice iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies” (Psalm 141:3-4).

John Calvin writes (not a blanket-agreement with Calvin, or endorsement of him as a true believer):

“As David was liable to be hurt at the unbridled and unprincipled rage of his enemies, so as to be tempted to act in a manner that might not be justifiable, he prays for divine direction, and not that he might be kept back from manual violence merely, but that his tongue might be restrained from venting reproach, or words of complaint. Even persons of the most self-possessed temper, if unwarrantably injured, will sometimes proceed to make retaliation, through their resenting the unbecoming conduct of their enemies. David prays accordingly that his tongue might be restrained by the Lord from uttering any word which was out of joint...Next he seeks that his heart be kept back from every mischievous device that might issue in revenge. The words added — that I may not eat of their delicacies, are to be understood figuratively, as a petition that he might not be tempted by the prosperity which they enjoyed in sin to imitate their conduct. The three things mentioned in the context are to be connected; and it may be advisable to consider each of them more particularly. Nothing being more difficult than for the victims of unjust persecution to bridle their speech, and submit silently and without complaint to injuries, David needed to pray that his mouth might be closed and guarded — that the door of his mouth might be kept shut by God, as one who keeps the gate watches the ingress and egress — נצרה, nitsrah, being the imperative of the verb, rather than a noun.

He next subjoins that God would not incline his heart to an evil thing; for דבר, dabar, is here, as in many other places, used to signify a thing.

Immediately after he explains himself to mean, that he would not desire to strive with them in wickedness, and thus make himself like his enemies. Had that monk of whom Eusebius makes mention duly reflected upon this resolution of David, he would not have fallen into the silly fallacy of imagining that he had shown himself the perfect scholar by observing silence for a whole term of seven years. Hearing that the regulation of the tongue was a rare virtue, he betook himself to a distant solitude, from which he did not return to his master for seven years; and being asked the cause of his long absence, replied that he had been meditating upon what he had learned from this verse. It would have been proper to have asked him at the same time, whether during the interim he had thought none, as well as spoken none. For the two things stand connected the being silent, and the being free from the charge of evil thoughts. It is very possible that although he observed silence, he had many ungodly thoughts, and these are worse than vain words. We have simply alluded in passing to this foolish notion, as what may convince the reader of the possibility of persons running away with a word torn from its connection, and overlooking the scope of the writer.

In committing himself to the guidance of God, both as to thoughts and words, David acknowledges the need of the influence of the Spirit for the regulation of his tongue and of his mind, particularly when tempted to be exasperated by the insolence of opposition. If, on the one hand, the tongue be liable to slip and too fast of utterance, unless continually watched and guarded by God; on the other, there are disorderly affections of an inward kind which require to be restrained. What a busy workshop is the heart of man, and what a host of devices is there manufactured every moment! If God do not watch over our heart and tongue, there will confessedly be no bounds to words and thoughts of a sinful kind, — so rare a gift of the Spirit is moderation in language, while Satan is ever making suggestions which will be readily and easily complied with, unless God prevent” (Calvin).

“O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him” (Psalm 140:7-11).

In our many afflictions, adversities, and battles with our theological enemies God has protected and preserved our heads. We have not lost them (our heads) due to the cunning and craftiness of wicked men who lie in wait to deceive, if possible, the very elect. According to Christ in John 10:5, the regenerate elect cannot be deceived. True Christians are “the ones in the power of God being guarded through faith to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). We exult in the regenerating power and preservation of God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“...yet a little while, if need be, grieving in manifold trials, so that the proving of your faith, much more precious than perishing gold, but having been proved through fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, you love; in whom not yet seeing, but believing, you exult with joy unspeakable and being glorified, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:7-9).

In the midst of spiritual battles with our adversaries, some who once professed faith in Jesus Christ have defected from true gospel faith. Purveyors of damnable heresies (religious and secular) have laid waste former supposed adherents of the faith at noonday. This shakes and grieves us to our very core.

“A thousand shall fall by your side, and a myriad at your right hand; it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes you shall look, and see the retribution of the wicked. Because You, O Jehovah, are My refuge; You make the Most High Your habitation, no evil shall happen to You, nor shall any plague come near Your tent. For He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways. They shall bear You up in their hands, that You not dash Your foot on a stone. You shall tread on the lion and adder; the young lion and the serpent You shall trample under foot. Because He has set His love on Me, therefore I will deliver Him; I will set Him on high because He has known My name” (Psalm 91:7-14).

A thousand may succumb and fall to the dark plague of defection. But it shall not come near us, thanks be to God our Refuge.

“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2 Corinthians 1:10).

“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4).

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18).

“Now to Him being able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you before His glory without blemish, with unspeakable joy; to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty and might and authority, even now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25).

“O Jehovah, how many are Your works! You have made all of them in wisdom; the earth is full of Your possessions” (Psalm 104:24).

One of my favorite unbelieving writers states the following:

“The prophet also, by the same eulogium, reproves the madness of those who dream, that the world has been brought into its present form by chance, as Epicurus raved about the elements being composed of atoms. As it is an imagination more than irrational to suppose, that a fabric so elegant, and of such surpassing embellishment, was put together by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the prophet here bids us attend more carefully to the wisdom of God, and to that wonderful skill which shines forth in the whole government of the world” (John Calvin).

A familiar phrase: “fortuitous concourse of atoms.” Interesting how Calvin does not “feel the need” to spend much time with the “materialism” of one Epicurus. Indeed it is “more than irrational” to assert that libraries build themselves and books write themselves.

“This is the sea, great and wide on both hands; there are creeping things even without number; living things, small and great. There the ships go; You formed this great sea-animal to play in it” (Psalm 104:25-26).

Calvin writes:

“After having treated of the evidences which the earth affords of the glory of God, the prophet goes down into the sea, and teaches us that it is a new mirror in which may be beheld the divine power and wisdom. Although the sea were not inhabited by fishes, yet the mere view of its vastness would excite our wonder, especially when at one time it swells with the winds and tempests, while at another it is calm and unruffled. Again, although navigation is an art which has been acquired by the skill of men, yet it depends on the providence of God, who has granted to men a passage through the mighty deep...As its movements not only throw the sea into great agitation, but also strike with alarm the hearts of men, the prophet, by the word sport, intimates that these its movements are only sport in respect of God; as if he had said, The sea is given to the leviathans, as a field in which to exercise themselves” (John Calvin).

Calvin’s commentary continued:

“The glory of Jehovah shall be forever; Jehovah shall rejoice in His works” (Psalm 104:31).

“It is no small honor that God for our sake has so magnificently adorned the world, in order that we may not only be spectators of this beautiful theater, but also enjoy the multiplied abundance and variety of good things which are presented to us in it. Our gratitude in yielding to God the praise

which is his due, is regarded by him as a singular recompense. What the Psalmist adds, Let Jehovah rejoice in his works, is not superfluous; for he desires that the order which God has established from the beginning may be continued in the lawful use of his gifts” (Calvin).

“I will sing to Jehovah during my life; I will sing praise to my God while I exist. My thoughts on Him shall be sweet; I will be glad in Jehovah” (Psalm 104:33-34).

“Here the Psalmist points out to others their duty by his own example, declaring, that throughout the whole course of his life he will proclaim the praises of God without ever growing weary of that exercise...the end for which we are created is, that the divine name may be celebrated by us on the earth” (Calvin).

“Let sinners be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more; bless Jehovah, O my soul; praise Jehovah!” (Psalm 104:35).

“This imprecation depends on the last clause of the 31st verse, Let Jehovah rejoice in his works As the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, the consequence is, that God has less delight in his own workmanship, and is even almost displeased with it. It is impossible, but that this uncleanness, which, being extended and diffused through every part of the world, vitiates and corrupts such a noble product of his hands, must be offensive to him. Since then the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God’s gifts, cause the world in a manner to degenerate and fall away from its first original, the prophet justly desires that they may be exterminated, until the race of them entirely fail. Let us then take care so to weigh the providence of God, as that being wholly devoted to obeying him, we may rightly and purely use the benefits which he sanctities for our enjoying

them. Farther, let us be grieved, that such precious treasures are wickedly squandered away, and let us regard it as monstrous and detestable, that men not only forget their Maker, but also, as it were, purposely turn to a perverse and an unworthy end, whatever good things he has bestowed upon them” (John Calvin).

Obviously there is displeasure in the preceptive sense, for certainly God DOES rejoice and take pleasure in the destruction that His hands perform and accomplish:

“And it shall be, as Jehovah rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so Jehovah shall rejoice over you to destroy you, and to lay you waste. And you shall be plucked from the land you are going to possess. And Jehovah shall scatter you among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other, and you shall serve other gods there, wood and stone, which you have not known, nor your fathers” (Deuteronomy 28:63-64).

“And Jehovah said to Moses, Get up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, So says Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, Send away My people that they may serve Me. For at this time I am going to send all My plagues to your heart, and on your servants, and on your people, so that you may know that none is like Me in all the land. For now I have sent forth My hand and have stricken you and your people with pestilence, and you have been destroyed from the earth. And for this reason I have made you stand, in order to cause you to see My power, and in order to declare My name in all the land. You still are exalting yourself against My people, so as not to send them away” (Exodus 9:13-17).

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very thing I raised you up, so

that I might display My power in you, and so that My name might be publicized in all the earth.' So, then, to whom He desires, He shows mercy. And to whom He desires, He hardens. You will then say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? Yes, rather, O man, who are you answering against God? Shall the thing formed say to the One forming it, Why did You make me like this?" (Romans 9:17-20).

"Why does He yet find fault" is the fashionable Calvinist meme. Though admittedly anachronistic for me to say, Pharaoh was the fashionable Calvinist of his day.

“And how precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more than the sand; when I awake I am still with You. Surely You will slay the wicked, O God; and men of blood will turn away from me. Who will maliciously speak against You? Your enemies are lifted up with vanity. O Jehovah, do not I hate those hating You? And am I not detesting those rising against You? I hate them with a perfect hatred; they have become my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if any wicked way is in me; and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:17-24).

A true, concise, and compendious statement about how Christians love and hate those who would rise up against the True and Living God.

“We HATE the wicked with perfect hatred (Psalm 139:22), AND we LOVE our enemies (Matthew 5:43). Is this paradox? In no way. It must be talking about two senses — two different considerations. We LOVE those whom we count as ENEMIES. We LOVE them when we bless them and do well to them and pray for them. We HATE them when we count them as the enemies of God and, by extension, our enemies.”

“I will thank You with my whole heart; I will sing praise to You before the gods; I will worship toward Your holy temple, and give thanks to Your name for Your mercy, and for Your truth; for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. You answered me in the day that I cried; You emboldened me in my soul with strength” (Psalm 138:1-3).

The New Testament book of Hebrews sets forth a resplendent view of God’s mercy that provided what His holy law and justice required.

“Therefore, brothers, having confidence for the entering of the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, which He consecrated for us, a new and living way through the veil; that is, His flesh; and having a Great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body having been washed in pure water; let us hold fast the confession of the hope unyielding, for He who has promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:19-23).

God promises to save all those for whom Jesus Christ was a propitiation (Romans 3:21-26). Those who believe that Jesus died for everyone without exception DENY (among other things) that a LIVING WAY was actually consecrated for all whom Jesus represented at the cross. This confession of universal atonement is NOT a “felicitous inconsistency” muttered from the muddled lips of regenerate brethren. Rather, this confession is a clear and distinct revelation of an unregenerate and evil conscience that seeks to enter the Holy of Holies by the sweat of self-righteous endeavor (cf. Romans 10:1-4; Philippians 3:2-9; 2 John 1:9). The Bible presents death as being victoriously put to death through the efficacious work of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). The universal atonement doctrine of demons presents death as being triumphant and very much alive.

I have difficulty completely understanding and articulating what “You have magnified Your Word above all Your name,” means. But it makes me think of how (in a sense) God’s Word of gospel promise witnessed in Christ’s incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension, and intercession is magnified above all the types and figures. There might be other (and perhaps more precise) ways to understand this phrase.

“And he likewise sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the service vessels with the blood. And almost all things are purified by blood according to the Law; and apart from shedding of blood no remission occurs. Then it was needful for the figures of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter into the Holy of Holies made by hands, types of the true things, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf, not that He should often offer Himself even as the high priest enters into the Holy of Holies year by year with blood of others; since He must often have suffered from the foundation of the world. But now once for all, at the completion of the ages, He has been manifested for putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is reserved to men once to die, and after this, Judgment; so Christ having been once offered to bear the sins of many, Christ shall appear a second time without sin to those expecting Him for salvation” (Hebrews 9:21-28).

Because we have this unyielding hope and earnest expectation of salvation by the blood of Jesus that truly puts and bears away sin, we cry out to God to embolden, strengthen, and energize us for His Name’s sake and by His Holy Spirit.

“Then having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilements of flesh and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

“... according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but as always in all boldness even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20-21).

“... this mystery among the nations, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ Jesus, for which also I labor, struggling according to the working of Him who works in me in power” (Colossians 1:27-29).

“For the saving grace of God has appeared to all men, instructing us that having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live discreetly and righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify a special people for Himself, zealous of good works. Speak these things and exhort and convict with all authority. Let no one despise you” (Titus 2:11-15).

“And let us consider one another, to incitement of love and of good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

“O Jehovah, remember for the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem; who said, Make it bare! Make it bare even to its foundation! O daughter of Babylon, O destroyed one! Blessed is he who shall repay to you your recompense which you dealt to us. Blessed is he who seizes your little ones and dashes them against the stone!” (Psalm 137:7-9).

Those who take issue with Psalm 137:9 fail to grasp many things, two of which are the implications of Psalm 51:5 and Romans 8:6. Those ashamed of this Psalm treasure little children more than God’s glory and honor. The popular sentiment is that the welfare of children is a supreme principle to which even God’s righteous and holy anger must bow. For some inconsistent atheist-types, quoting Psalm 137:9 is proof-positive that there is no God and they are His prophet.

God says that He predestined the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23, 4:28) and was “pleased to crush Him” (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus Christ was crushed on behalf of, and bore the sins of His people.

“By His knowledge the righteous One, My Servant, shall justify for many, and He shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Truly He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up on behalf of us all, how will He not freely give all things to us with Him? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? God is the One justifying! Who is he condemning? It is Christ who has died, but rather also is raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession on our behalf. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Even as it has been written, For Your sake we are killed all the day; we are counted as sheep of slaughter. But in all these things we more than

conquer through Him loving us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

Truly He who did not spare His own Son will not spare the reprobate (non-elect) wicked. All for whom Jesus died are spared, and will NEVER be separated from the love of God. They are mercifully nourished by God (Ephesians 5:28-30). And all for whom Jesus did NOT die will be His footstool. They will be trodden in the winepress of the anger and wrath of the Lamb.

“And as they led Him away, having laid hold on a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, coming from a field, they put the cross on him, to bear it behind Jesus. And a great multitude of people were following Him, and of women who also were bewailing and lamenting Him. And turning to them, Jesus said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep over Me, but weep over yourselves and over your children. For behold, days will come in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that did not bear, and breasts that did not suckle. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us! And to the hills, Cover us! For if they do these things in the green tree, what may take place in the dry?” (Luke 23:26-31).

“And the heaven departed like a scroll being rolled up. And every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the rich ones, and the commanders, and the powerful ones, and every slave, and every freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of His wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:14-17).

“But He, offering but one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, from then on expecting until His enemies are placed as a footstool of His feet. For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Christians tremble and consider Christ’s efficacious atonement and the clear distinction between footstool and fragrance. Those who believe that Jesus died for everyone without exception are God-haters who have blindly blurred that distinction.

“Then become imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

The self-righteously bloated ones that believe Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception DENY that this precious Offering and Sacrifice was to God a sweet-smelling savor.

“Every thing which Jehovah was pleased to do, He did, in the heavens and in the earth, and in the seas and all deep places” (Psalm 135:6).

The tenacious adherents of pseudo-sovereignty posit a supposed “tension” (i.e., contradiction) between Psalm 135:6 and this portion of Ezekiel 18 (bold underlined emphasis mine):

“But the wicked, if he will turn from all his sins which he has done, and keep all My statutes, and do justice and righteousness, living he shall live; he shall not die. All his transgressions that he has done, they shall not be recalled to him in his righteousness which he has done; he shall live. Delighting, do I delight in the death of the wicked? declares the Lord Jehovah. Is it not that he should turn from his ways and live? But when the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, according to all the abominations that the wicked do, he does, shall he live? All his righteousness that he has done shall not be remembered in his treason that he has betrayed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them he shall die. Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not fair. Hear now, O house of Israel. Is My way not fair? Are your ways not unfair? When a righteous one turns from his righteousness and does injustice and dies in them, he shall die for his injustice which he has done. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness that he has done and does justice and righteousness, he shall keep his soul alive. Because he sees and turns from all his transgressions that he has done, living he shall live; he shall not die. But the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not fair. Are My ways not fair, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not fair? I will judge you, each man by his ways, O house of Israel, declares the Lord Jehovah. Turn and be made to turn from all your transgressions, and iniquity shall not be a stumbling-block to you. Cast away all your transgressions from you by which you have transgressed in them, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel? For I do not have delight in the death of him who dies, declares the Lord Jehovah. So turn and live” (Ezekiel 18:21-32).

God does NOT have delight in fruit unto death.

“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free as to righteousness. Therefore what fruit did you have then in the things over which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death” (Romans 6:20-21).

“For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin were working in our members through the Law for the bearing of fruit unto death” (Romans 7:5).

God DOES have delight in fruit unto God.

“So that, my brothers, you also were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ, for you to become Another’s, to the One raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit to God” (Romans 7:4).

Ezekiel 18:21-32 juxtaposes turning and living with rebelling and dying.

“Delighting, do I delight in the death of the wicked? declares the Lord Jehovah. Is it not that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezekiel 18:23)

The “death of him who dies” is inseparably connected with this dying one’s impenitence. God does not delight in the death of him who dies because God does not delight in those wages that bring that death about. Implicit in

Ezekiel 18:23's "do I delight in the death of the wicked?" and "Is it not that he should turn from his ways and live?" is the sinful rebellion to which the wicked's death is attached. God does not delight in the death of the wicked because God does not delight in the wicked's refusal to turn and live. God says He does "not have delight in the death of him who dies" (Ezekiel 18:32). THEREFORE "turn and live" (Ezekiel 18:32).

In one sense God does NOT delight in rotten and rebellious fruit and the end thereof (which is death). This is why He says "turn and live." But in another sense, He certainly DOES delight in the death of him who dies since He takes pleasure in destroying those who rebel against Him.

"And it shall be, as Jehovah rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so Jehovah shall rejoice over you to destroy you, and to lay you waste. And you shall be plucked from the land you are going to possess" (Deuteronomy 28:63).

"Because I called, and you refused; I stretch out a hand, and none inclines, but you have ignored all my counsel, and you did not desire my warning. I also will laugh in your calamity, I will mock when your dread comes" (Proverbs 1:24-26).

In one sense God does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18), and in another sense He does (Psalm 135:6–11 and Deuteronomy 28:63). Also consider how God was pleased with the death of His Son in one sense (e.g., "But Jehovah pleased to crush Him" (Isaiah 53:10), while displeased in another sense (e.g., "the Author of Life you killed" (Acts 3:15). The senses here are decree and precept. Another example is Pharaoh. God was displeased with Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let His people go (precept). And God was pleased to actively harden Pharaoh so

that he could not let His people go (decree).

To conclude this post. A Christian brother made these insightful and relevant comments (on 7/24/09):

“There must be a distinction made between the pleasure that God always has at His decreive will being accomplished and the displeasure He has that does not have to do with His decreive will.

For example, is God displeased with sin? Of course He is. Yet He has decreed sin, and so He is pleased with it in terms of His decreive will being accomplished.

Look at the following passages regarding God’s pleasure that use the same Hebrew word as in Ezekiel:

Psalms 147:10-11 He takes no delight in the strength of the horse, nor any pleasure in the legs of a man. Jehovah takes pleasure in those who fear Him, those who hope in His mercy.

Isaiah 1:11 What good to Me are your many sacrifices, says Jehovah? I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fattened cattle, and the blood of bulls; nor do I delight in the blood of lambs and he goats.

Isaiah 65:12 And I will number you to the sword; and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because I called and you did not answer. I spoke, and you did not hear; and you did the evil in My eyes; and you chose that in which I had no pleasure.

Isaiah 66:4 I also will choose their vexations; and I will bring their fears to them; because I called, and no one answered; I spoke, and they did not hear. But they did the evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I had no pleasure.

“Behold, bless Jehovah, all servants of Jehovah; who stand in the house of Jehovah at night. Lift up your hands in the holy place, and bless Jehovah. May Jehovah bless you out of Zion, He who made the heavens and earth” (Psalm 134:1-3).

All servants of Jehovah may stand in the house of Jehovah and lift up their hands in the holy place by virtue of the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. They are blessed out of Zion on the sole grounds of their Great High Priest’s propitiating blood and everlasting righteousness.

“John to the seven assemblies in Asia: Grace to you, and peace, from the One who is, and who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits which are before His throne; even from Jesus Christ the Faithful Witness, the First-born out of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him loving us and washing us from our sins by His blood, and made us kings and priests to God, even His Father. To Him is the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:4-6).

“And I saw, and behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, was a Lamb standing, as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, having been sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him sitting on the throne. And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps, and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign over the earth” (Revelation 5:6-10).

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them. And judgment was given to them, and the souls of the ones having been beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast nor its image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one having part in the first resurrection. The second death has no authority over these, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4-6).

Every single person that Jesus Christ died for and was resurrected for will without fail take part in the first resurrection; the second death has no authority over them.

“But when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then will take place the Word that has been written, Death was swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory? Now 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 15:54-57; cf. Romans 4:23-25).

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psalm 133:1-3).

Some time ago a brother wrote the following piece on Christian Unity:

“What an indescribably precious thing love and unity among believers is! It is a unity based on our unity with Christ. God is our father, and we are brothers (including believing women). It is a unity based on a common walk in the light: ‘but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7). It is a unity based on a common belief of and defense of the truth of the gospel: ‘... that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel’ (Philippians 1:27b). It is a unity based on common adversaries and common suffering: ‘and in nothing be terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake’ (Philippians 1:28-29).

We love the same things. We hate the same things. We are closer than any natural blood relations. We love our Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. We hate all false gospels that condition salvation in any way, to any degree, on the sinner. We speak peace to each other based on our common salvation. We do not speak peace to our brothers’ enemies. We desire to fellowship with each other. We rejoice together in Christ and defend each other against the attacks of our enemies. We help each other

in times of need. These are the ways in which we show our love for each other.

God said, 'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes' (1 John 2:9-11). Loving the brothers is not an option. Those who do not love believers show themselves to be unregenerate. For example, if a professing believer says that some who believe in universal atonement are his brothers in Christ, then he is speaking peace to the enemies of the people of God, showing that he actually hates the people of God. His is not in unity with the people of God. He is one of those 'which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned' (Romans 16:17). We are to point out and avoid such people. But when we find those who believe the truth and thus judge by the truth, we are to embrace them as our brothers in Christ. We may have differences, but they are not gospel differences. We are to bear with the weaknesses of one another in love.

God's people are all over the world, of different races, tongues, and circumstances. Let us who are believers seek them out and love them."

True Christians believe AND judge by the truth. They do NOT "believe" the truth while judging by the lie. Unlike the multitudes of Tolerant Calvinist ψευδάδελφος (Galatians 2:4), true brothers (and sisters) do NOT profess to believe the TRUE gospel while judging saved and lost by the FALSE gospel. The gospel standard a person uses to judge regenerate and unregenerate is the gospel standard that is truly believed in (Romans 1:16-17).

God the Holy Spirit has brought His unregenerate elect out of ignorant darkness and brought them into His marvelous regenerating gospel light:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). And through the word of God’s gospel comes “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” as an immediate and inevitable FRUIT of the Spirit’s regenerating work. Tolerant Calvinists such as James White vehemently DENY this precious truth.

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).

My brother in Christ had written:

[“We may have differences, but they are not gospel differences.”](#)

Ephesians 4:3-6 expresses the truth that Christians are unified in the gospel truth. There are absolutely no doctrinal differences when it comes to the hope and ground of their salvation: The atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ ALONE.

Ephesians 4:3-6 unity does NOT admit of the diabolical degrees of tolerant Calvinism by which a person is “regenerated” by the false gospel of Galatians 1:8-9 and only later “grows into” the true gospel of Romans 1:16-17. These tolerant Calvinists believe that a “jesus” whom the apostles did NOT preach is revealed to at least some people upon regeneration (2 Corinthians 11:4; cf. Galatians 1:15-16). This undoubtedly reveals that they believe the anathematized gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Galatians 1:8-9).

“...And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11-16).

However Ephesians 4:11-16 is interpreted, the following is clear from the whole of Scripture:

Some true Christians are “babes in Christ” who require further instruction and correction “till [they] all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

All true mature Christian “non-babes” without exception require instruction and correction and seek to grow in the grace and “knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” to press on to perfection (Philippians 3:12-14; cf. 2 Peter 3:18).

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 may represent one kind of doctrinal wind a true Christian can be carried about by:

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

However immature a regenerate babe in Christ may be, it is IMPOSSIBLE for them to be carried about by those doctrinal winds that are indicative of lostness:

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

“Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. The one abiding in the doctrine of Christ, this one has the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bear this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, and do not speak a greeting to him. For the one speaking a greeting shares in his evil works” (2 John 1:9-

11).

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:4-5).

Christ’s sheep have differences, but they are not gospel differences. They are unified in their knowledge of the True Shepherd. And a stranger who died for everyone without exception (in whatever “sense”) they will not follow, but will flee from him. For they know not the voice of strangers. Theirs is a blessed unified hearing, knowing, following, and fleeing. They give thanks and glory to the One who was pierced for their transgressions and who guides them in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake (Psalm 23:3; cf. Isaiah 53:5).