

Unconditional Love

What does the Bible Teach?

By Dennis Fischer

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Dear Friends,

In the world today there are beliefs that are so widely accepted they become axiomatic (a self-evident truth). For the most part one sees axioms in mathematical formulas and scientific principles. However, they can also extend to virtually every area of human endeavor and thought.

The booklet you are about to read addresses an axiom of Christianity that is so firmly entrenched in a believer's lexicon that few, if any, have ever thought to challenge it. It just seems so logical. How could it not be true? Furthermore, to contradict this belief would appear to go totally contrary to everything true believers have come to understand and love about the plan of God and the sacrifice of His Son.

However, upon closer examination of this axiom, a problem emerges. As a result, what seemed to be so true isn't true at all. On the contrary, it is actually a counterfeit doctrine masquerading as something genuine. Furthermore, to embrace this belief actually poses a clear and present danger to God's people because it requires them to ignore a profound ABSOLUTE about the most selfless act in history

As you proceed through the following pages your initial reaction might be one of outrage. You may even think that you could never worship the God it describes. However, when you get to the end I am confident you will see a side to the Almighty that will engender an even deeper sense of reverence and awe of Him.

Enjoy the journey.

Dennis Fischer

Introduction:

When I was young I was told a story that simply fascinated me. I don't know if the story was true but it really makes no difference—its point could be drawn either way. Here is how it goes.

“Funny Money”

In an effort to curb a rash of counterfeit money being circulated in Southern California the secret service commissioned several of their top agents to provide special training on how to detect this “Funny Money.” The agents would meet with community leaders and offer them a unique formula guaranteed to insure that they would never be stuck with the worthless “dough” again. Interest in acquiring this knowledge was very high and several seminars were scheduled.

In one particular meeting the agent would address employees of a large network bank. The session was scheduled to take place on a Wednesday evening because that was the day all the employees would be working. It was also conducted in the bank's regional office because of the number of people attending (nearly 100). The bank even provided a catered meal and of course compensated all employees in attendance.

The Meeting Begins

After introducing himself and making some general comments about the impact counterfeit currency has on the economy, the agent places a brief case on a table in front of his audience. He then opens it and removes a pair of latex gloves. He puts the gloves on. Next out of the case was a dark piece of fabric which he neatly spreads out on the table. He then removes a pair of tweezers which he also places on the table. While doing this his audience is transfixed on him.

The last item the agent removes from his case is a zip lock bag with a hundred dollar bill in it. Using the tweezers he very carefully removes the bill and gently places it face up on the dark cloth.

At this point the agent invites his audience to come up and examine the bill but requests that they not touch it. If they would like it turned over or moved in any way they can ask him and he will be more than happy to accommodate the request. Throughout this demonstration he encourages attendees to examine the bill very carefully and try to identify any flaws in it.

At this point it is important to note that his audience consists of professional bankers. If anyone can detect a blemish that would compromise the bill's authenticity it would be them. After all, their business was money and they were experts at it. Furthermore, they applied all their collective skill when scrutinizing the item that lay before them. They examined its fibers, coloration and even its size and shape. They reviewed the face plate and serial numbers. They even collaborated with each other comparing observations.

At the conclusion of the exercise the agent asked his audience what they had discovered. In response, one after another acknowledged that the bill was extraordinary and that it just might be the best counterfeit they had ever seen. They even admitted that they might be fooled by it if someone tried to pass it at their office. At this point the agent responded, “Oh, this is not a counterfeit, its real. There is nothing wrong with it.” His response puzzled the audience and prompted the following reaction. “We thought you were going to teach us how to detect a counterfeit, why this? The agent then explained, “I just did. Anything that does not look just like this is fake—regardless of how real it appears.

A Timeless Lesson

The obvious lesson one can draw from this is that there are an endless number of ways to create something that is not authentic. But there is only one way to create something that is GENUINE. This axiom has enormous implication when it comes to God's truth and His people. And just like the best way to avoid being deceived with counterfeit money is to judge it in light of what is real, the only way to avoid believing false doctrine is to judge it in the light of biblical truth. In other words, the only way truth can be ascertained is by measuring it in the light of scripture as opposed to tradition.

This now brings us to the question of the day. Is there a counterfeit doctrine so well-conceived that it has been embraced by virtually every Christian denomination including the Churches of God? Sadly, the answer is YES. Furthermore, it is one that scores of ministers and members within His Church proclaim with unbridled confidence without ever questioning what this belief says about the power of God and the sacrifice of His Son.

What Is It?

This false doctrine is the belief that God's love is unconditional—that it is offered without qualification. Many who embrace this belief even go so far as to contend that those condemned to lake of fire are not deprived of it. But is this true? For example, does God love the defiant? Does He love those who firmly set their will toward evil?

Those who believe the answer is yes are gravely mistaken. Even worse, a strong case can be made that such an error in thinking poses a tangible threat to God's people and their pursuit of His Kingdom. What does the Bible Teach?

The scriptures speak with great force concerning God's love and declare that it does NOT come without conditions. Furthermore, this truth applies to other attributes of the Almighty including His mercy, His forgiveness, His friendship, and even His Lordship, To better understand this truth let's examine each of these wonderful virtues and learn why they would be compromised if offered without qualification.

Part I

God Regarding His Mercy

Clearly, God is a being of great mercy. This quality even defines in part, who He is. The 105th Psalm declares that God's mercy is everlasting while the 118th Psalm describes it as enduring for ever. But does the Bible ever state that God gives His mercy to everyone regardless. In other words, He extends it unconditionally. The plain truth is that the scriptures say no such thing. On the contrary, they declare just the opposite. The book of Deuteronomy even identifies who receives His mercy and who does not.

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. (Deut. 32:43)

In this verse, it is clear that God makes a distinction between those who receive His mercy and those who suffer His judgment. However, despite the words quoted here and elsewhere, some leaders in God's Church claim that the Almighty's mercy is NEVER withheld. One particular leader even went so far as to assert that it is extended toward Satan himself. Here is how he made this argument.

"Jesus Christ was a reflection of God the Father. He literally did on earth as He had seen His Father do in heaven (Jn. 5:30, 8:28, 10:38). He judged righteously, showing love and kindness toward others. Even in the most horrible of circumstances, he continued to

show enormous compassion. This multi-faceted act of Christ reveals the essence of God's nature. He is the epitome of mercy. Psalm 136 echoes this theme in each and every one of its 26 verses. At the end of every single sentence, it is declared that His mercy will never end. God's mercy exists for all eternity! How could anyone believe that His mercy fails when it comes to Satan and the demons?"

A Huge mistake in Reasoning

Contrary to what this leader asserts, God's mercy, although everlasting and unfailing is NOT given to everyone. Furthermore, this truth is borne out in the very Psalm being cited.

Psalm 136 is a declaration of adoration and praise to God as a Creator and Deliverer (Redeemer). The first nine verses of this exquisite passage acknowledge His strength and wisdom when creating the universe—and declare that this act was an expression of His mercy. Verse 10 then transitions to Him as a great rescuer of His people. However, here is where the problem with this leader's argument presents itself. According to his logic, God must have killed Egypt's firstborn as an act of mercy toward Egypt—to put them out of their misery. He must have also drowned Pharaoh's armies in the Red Sea for the same reason. But is that true?

As you read the verses below ask yourself if there is even a remote possibility that God wants you to see Him expressing mercy toward Egypt—the enemy (oppressor) of His people.

Psalm 136:10-16

To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endures for ever:

And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endures for ever:

With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endures for ever.

To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endures for ever:

And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endures for ever:

But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endures for ever.

To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endures for ever.

In truth, EVERY stanza of this passage declares God's mercy toward His people—NOT their enemies. For any true believer to employ them as proof that mercy belongs to everyone—including the DEVIL, constitutes a reproach to God's word and is an insult to mercy itself.

Once again, here is how God the Merciful expresses this truth. Notice who receives His mercy and who receives His vengeance.

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. (Deut. 32:43)

King David put it this way.

Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies [upon] the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. (Psa. 3:7)

I'm just curious, but do those with the temerity to cite Psalm 136 as proof that God's shows mercy to everyone including the Devil, sincerely believe that King David would concur with their position? In other words, do they honestly think that this king, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), would ever declare God's mercy toward evil and the evil one?

Is the Second Death an act of Mercy?

Contrary to what so many believe, God's word states with GREAT force that mercy and condemnation CANNOT coexist—you either receive one or the other—NEVER BOTH. This is because one is the exclusive product of COMPASSION while the other is the exclusive product of CONTEMPT and WRATH. To illustrate this point consider the words of the Messiah in one of His most powerful parables. It addresses God's judgment as it relates to His Kingdom and those who will be a part of it. The Parable was prompted by a question proffered by the apostle Peter.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (Mt. 18:21)

Peter probably thought himself generous by suggesting seven times because in rabbinical discussions, the consensus was that forgiveness should be offered three times for a sin; on the fourth occurrence there was no more forgiveness. However, Jesus' answer shows that it is His desire that forgiveness should not be limited by frequency or quantity under certain conditions.

Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Verse 22)

However, Jesus is not finished. He then teaches His disciples a lesson that illustrates the power of God's mercy as well as its limitations. That's right. God's mercy has its limits.

"The Unmerciful Servant"

In the parable of the "Unmerciful Servant," Jesus tells the story of a King who is taking an account of his servants (Mt 18:23). The Messiah would later reveal that this King pictured His Father in heaven (v. 35). During this accounting it was discovered that one of His servants owed Him an insurmountable debt—ten thousand talents (v. 24). The King then demanded that payment be made (v. 25). At that point the servant fell down before Him and begged for MERCY (v.26). Jesus then reveals that the King was entreated of him and FORGAVE the entire debt. This now brings us to a very important question.

What moved the King to extend
mercy to His servant?

The answer is found in the very next verse.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with COMPASSION, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. (Mt. 18:27)

Notice that there is a direct link between mercy and compassion. But does that link also exist between condemnation and compassion? Fortunately, Jesus provides the answer in the same parable. Let's continue.

God Withdraws His Mercy

As it turned out, the servant who was forgiven his debt had an opportunity to forgive someone who owed him. Unfortunately, he wasn't the slightest bit interested in extending the same mercy he had received from his Lord. Instead, he threw his debtor in prison (vs. 28-30).

When word got back to the King of what had transpired, the King summoned His servant and demanded an explanation. He then unleashed a blistering indictment against him—and actually withdrew the mercy He had given him—leaving His servant once again, hopelessly in debt. As a result, that servant was delivered to the “tormentors” (vs. 31-34).

This now brings us to a very important question—one that weighs directly on this particular point.

What moved the King to take the action He took?

Here is the King's answer.

Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? And his lord was WROTH, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. (Mt 18:33-34)

Notice that when the King originally extended mercy He was moved by compassion (v. 27). But now, when He extends condemnation, He is moved by RAGE—He is “WROTH” with the man. This word is synonymous with “wrath,” which means, “hot anger,” “indignation,” and “violent emotion” (Strong's G3709). There is not one ounce of mercy in this term. In truth, the unmerciful servant was actually stripped of every drop of pity he had received earlier.

Jesus concludes by warning that God will do the same to those who refuse to show mercy toward others.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses. (Mt. 18:35)

For anyone to claim that God is going to show mercy to the most merciless being in history is mind-boggling. Satan is diabolically vicious and cruel, and he has made a career of showing absolutely no pity on God's people. He is their accuser, not their advocate. Here is how the apostle John described him And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (Rev.12:10)

The argument that God's mercy will even extend to devil himself is a HORRIBLE mistake and reveals a complete lack of understanding of the TRUE God and how He thinks. The scriptures tell us that His judgment of Satan will be totally devoid of mercy. In other words Satan will get what he has given. Perhaps James said it best.

For he shall have judgment (condemnation) WITHOUT mercy, that has shown no mercy; and mercy rejoices (triumphs) against judgment. (Jas. 2:13)

This is Satan's fate—judgment WITHOUT mercy. It is also the fate of all who are condemned to the lake of fire.

Although many sincere Christians believe God's mercy is for everyone, it most certainly IS NOT. The Kingdom is a great gift—but not everyone will seek it. Christ's sacrifice is a great gift—but not everyone

will claim it. God's compassion is a great gift—but not everyone will desire it. These wonderful treasures are only given to those who will cherish them.

Part II

God Regarding His Forgiveness

The power to forgive is directly linked to mercy. Furthermore, it is one of the qualities that sets God apart from all others. When He forgives He erases the transgression—and by doing so makes everything new. The Almighty used the prophet Jeremiah to convey this very point.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:34)

However, the Almighty does not extend forgiveness capriciously.

Regrettably, despite this truth some advance a very interesting perspective concerning God's mercy and how it is expressed. Furthermore, when doing so they completely misrepresent the scriptures including one of Christ's most powerful utterances. Here are the exact words of a Christian fellowship when attempting to prove that no one is ever deprived of God's mercy.

"Consider the example of the mercy of Jesus Christ. Our Savior was brutally beaten—even beyond recognition (Isa. 52:14). He was dying in agony as His weight hung on nails pounded through His limbs and into the wooden stake. Blood flowed from the wounds in his body as He suffered the rejection and torment of men. During this tragic and terribly painful experience, Jesus found it nearly impossible to breathe. Still, He used what little breath He could muster to pray and ask the Father to forgive His tormentors."

Here, it is suggested that because Jesus is merciful, His mercy extends to everyone. But the Bible says no such thing. As a matter of fact, the very example being cited actually contradicts the point its advocates are trying to make. To better understand this, consider what was taking place when the Messiah uttered the prayer they refer to.

"Father Forgive Them"

During the initial hours of His crucifixion, Jesus appealed to His Father to have pity on those responsible for His murder. Here are the Messiah's exact words.

Father, forgive them; for they KNOW NOT what they do. (Lk. 23:34)

Notice what Jesus did NOT say. He did not say: "Father, forgive them; for they KNOW what they do." This is because to do so would require Him to reject everything about God and who He is. It is true that God is merciful, but He is not GULLIBLE, nor is He STUPID. Furthermore, contrary to what some believe, God's mercy is no more extended to the defiant than the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is offered to the unrepentant. At this point, it is important to understand that God's word is very clear with respect to Christ's sacrifice as it relates to the mercy that made it possible. Here is how the author of Hebrews put it.

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains NO MORE SACRIFICE for sins, (Heb. 10:26)

To sin willfully means to sin with purpose and dedication with the specific intent to thwart God. The point here is that God's mercy, as reflected in Christ's sacrifice, does not extend to those who consciously set their will against Him. There is nothing in the scriptures that suggests otherwise. But there is more.

The Bible also tells us that just as there remains no more sacrifice for one who sins willfully, there is also a point beyond which one can even repent.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (Heb. 6: 4-6)

At this point it is VERY IMPORTANT to understand that God is not saying that everyone that strays from Him is condemned. One only has to read the parable of The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) to see this. Even God's instructions to His pastors to leave the 99 and go after the one sheep that has gone astray illustrates this truth Lk. 15:4-7). The point being conveyed in Hebrews is that if one deliberately rejects God when fully understanding the consequences of his actions, and not caring, to ever care (and thus repent) again.

Conditional Forgiveness

God's forgiveness is definitely a GIFT. But it isn't given unconditionally. This is a truth that is shouted out from the pages of your Bible. Notice the word "IF" in the following verses. This two letter word constitutes the greatest condition in print.

IF my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.(II Chronicles 7:14)

Isaiah 1: 19-20

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

But **if** ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Now ask yourself a question: what happens if His people don't humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways? Will the Almighty forgive their sin and heal their land anyway?

And what if they refused to obey would they live in peace and prosperity?

Then, when giving the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus outlines one of the conditions that must be met in order to receive forgiveness from the Father.

For **IF** ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

This now begs a question. What if God's people don't forgive the trespasses of others? Will He still forgive them? Or, is His forgiveness predicated on whether we forgive those who trespass against us. Jesus provides the answer.

But **IF** ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt. 6: 14-15)

Further evidence of the conditional nature of God's forgiveness was expressed by the apostle John. In his second epistle, John identifies another way to gain access to God's forgiveness, and once again there are conditions.

IF we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn. 1:9)

But what if we don't confess our sins? Will He still cleanse us? Will He forgive us? Make no mistake about it, God wants to forgive. The apostle Peter made that fact perfectly clear.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pe. 3:9)

Here is how Paul expressed it when writing to the evangelist Timothy.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim.2:3-4)

Clearly, God is a forgiving God. But His forgiveness is not without conditions. The choice in this regard is really quite simple: If one refuses to repent (condition) there will be no forgiveness. And without forgiveness there is only death. Here is how the Messiah expressed it in words that couldn't be more clear. Furthermore, he uttered them twice.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Lk. 13: 1-5)

Here is the point. Regardless of how vigorously some may contend that God's mercy, as reflected in His forgiveness, is offered without conditions, it simply isn't true. The Almighty's righteousness demands to be honored. For God to extend mercy to those who refuse to repent would do just the opposite. It would be a mockery to Himself and His law.

We now come to God's friendship. And once again it doesn't come without conditions.

Part III

God Regarding His Friendship

The Bible speaks of having a friendship with God and even identified those who enjoyed such a relationship. The book of Exodus reveals that Moses spoke with God as a man speaks with a friend (Ex. 33:11).

Additionally, Abraham was specifically referred to by God Himself as His friend.

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. (Isa. 41: 8)

This fact was confirmed by James, the Lord's brother.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (Jas. 2:23)

John the Baptist pro-actively asserted that distinction for himself when explaining to his disciples that his ministry was subordinate to that of the Messiah's.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (Jn.3:29)

To be called a friend of God is an unimaginable honor. And the gospel of John says that distinction was bestowed by Jesus on His disciples on the night He was betrayed.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. (Jn. 15:15)

But is our Savior's friendship without qualification? In other words, is it given unconditionally? Here is what Jesus Himself said when speaking about His impending sacrifice

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (Jn. 15:13-14).

Here is the question:

What if the disciples refuse to do what Christ commanded them? Would He still consider them His friends?

Part IV God Regarding His Lordship

The scriptures refer to Jesus not only as Lord, but as the Lord of lords. And when He returns to earth as a great warrior He will wear that mantle.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. (Rev. 17: 14)

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev. 19:15-16

Jesus' sovereignty over all things is undeniable, and there can be no greater privilege than to be able to confidently claim His Lordship. But is His Lordship unconditional?

Here is His answer

Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Mt.7:21-23)

The Messiah then makes a clear distinction between the benefits of obedience versus the consequences of defiance.

Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Mt. 7:24-27)

Precious Treasures

God's mercy, His forgiveness, His Friendship and even His Lordship not only help define who God is, but what He desires of His people. However, the scriptures also shout out that God doesn't give these precious treasures away causally. They all come with "strings attached." Furthermore, the Bible explains why God wouldn't give them away capriciously.

Pearls Before Swine

In what is arguably the most famous sermon ever given, Jesus once instructed His followers to not cast their pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6). This is because we must cherish the things that have value and not casually share such things with those who would treat them as worthless.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. (Mt. 7:6)

Although it may be tempting to believe that God's mercy, His forgiveness, His Friendship and even His Lordship is for everyone, they most certainly are not. These wonderful treasures will only be given to those who will see them for what they truly are (PRICELESS) and cherish them as such.

Part V

God's Regarding His Love

We now come to LOVE, the greatest of all treasures. Certainly this gift must be different. After all, God is LOVE. Love actually defines who He is (1 Jn. 4:8,16). Furthermore, His love is formidable—not easily broken. When writing to the church at Rome Paul described it this way.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro. 8: 38-39).

These are powerful words. But what are they saying? Are they suggesting that God loves all people in all states for all time? If you read Paul's words carefully you will see that he is saying no such thing. In truth Paul is revealing that no EXTERNAL force can separate us from the love of God. But what about an internal force—something within us? In other words, could we separate ourselves from God's love? Here is what the Messiah said about this very issue.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (Jn 15: 9-10).

But what happens if we don't keep His commandments? Will we still abide in His love? Or will we abide in another place? Regardless of how committed people are to the belief that God's love is unconditional it just isn't true. When it comes to compassion, the scriptures reveal that there is definitely a point when God's love will stop and in its place will be nothing but contempt. Furthermore, that contempt will be focused directly toward the sinner.

A King's Perspective

King David often wrote concerning how God viewed iniquity. And on more than one occasion he proclaimed that His contempt for lawlessness can even extend to the perpetrator (law breaker). Consider some examples.

The foolish shall not stand in your sight: You HATE all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will ABHOR the bloody and deceitful man. (Psa. 5: 5-6)

The word "abhor" used by David, comes from the Hebrew term *ta' ab* (Strong's H8581). It means: "to detest, to loathe, and to regard as an abomination." This is how a loving God sees those who show utter contempt for His moral authority. In a later Psalm, David makes another observation regarding God's view of those who recklessly defy Him.

The LORD tries the righteous: but the wicked and him that loves violence HIS SOUL HATES. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. (Psalm 11:5-6)

With these words David is putting a king's perspective on God's view of evil. Simply put, the Almighty will NEVER accommodate lawlessness, or those who commit it. It is true, that as an act of LOVE, God offered the life of His Son as a ransom for the human family (1 Cor. 15:3, Heb. 9:28), but that sacrifice and the love that inspired it (Jn. 3:16, See also: Psalm 103) does not extend to those who refuse to repent (Heb. 10:26).

Sin and the Sinner

To best understand God's perspective on sin and the sinner, consider how He viewed the sacrifice of His Own Son. The great prophet Isaiah wrote that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, and that He was bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53:5). The PHYSICAL ordeal and the EMOTIONAL impact of what was taking place in His life at that time is simply mind boggling. But Jesus was committed to this endeavor because of His desire to reconcile humanity back to the Father (Rom. 5:10). It is for this reason that he endured the indignity of a horrible death.

Despising the Shame

The scriptures reveal that as Jesus was suffering the final moments of His torturous execution, He would have to take all the sins of mankind on Himself. In other words, all the evil ever perpetrated by the human family would have to be conveyed to the Him. In that state even the slightest moral blemish HURT. It was at this time that Jesus BECAME SIN. He now felt the ugliness of every act of depravity as well as every nuance of error. He also knew that He had become everything His Father despised. The book of Hebrews actually reveals how Christ saw himself in this condition.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, DISPIRING THE SHAME, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb.12:2)

We can buzz right past these words and not have a clue what is being said here. However, that would be a horrible mistake. The word "shame" in this verse comes from the Greek *Aischyne*. It means

“ignominy, disgrace and dishonor arising from guilt” (See: Strong’s G152). All of us have felt shame about things we’ve done. But it’s different with us. Our shame is from the context of a sinner. Imagine how someone who is morally pristine would feel shame.

The source of Messiah’s shame was the sin He bore (our sin)—and Jesus ABHORED every drop of it—He “DESPISED” it because He saw it the way His Father saw it. The word “despise” is translated from the Greek *kataphroneo* (Strong’s G2706). It means to “condemn, despise and disdain.” The point to this verse should be obvious. Jesus saw Himself through His Father’s eyes and He hated what was there.

The scriptures also reveal that as our Savior hung suspended in this sinful state, His Father turned away (in DISGUST), leaving Him to die alone. This act prompted Him to cry out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Mt. 27:46). The term “forsaken” comes from the Greek *egkataleipo* (Strong’s G1459) and means to “totally abandon, desert, leave in straits, leave helpless, and to utterly forsake.” The point here is that God didn’t simply step back and observe Christ’s final moments from a distance—He literally walked away and “TOTALLY ABANDONED” His Son—and there is a reason He reacted this way.

The Ultimate Reconciliation

As hard as it is to comprehend, Jesus actually became abhorrent to His Father. He was repulsive and THOROUGHLY disgusting to Him. As a result, all the intimacy they had experienced throughout eternity was completely severed. In essence, Jesus became TOTALLY estranged from the Father. It is ironic that while the Messiah had become estranged from His Father, God’s human family was becoming reconciled back to Him (Rom. 5:10).

In essence, Jesus took upon Himself the penalty reserved for mankind. In other words, He accepted His Father’s CONTEMPT in order that mankind would not have to. In that state our Savior was deprived of any mercy or compassion. His fate was ABSOLUTE REJECTION and TOTAL CONDEMNATION.

The price Jesus paid to redeem the human family from the consequences of sin is more remarkable than many may realize. Perhaps the following explanation will add some perspective on this extraordinary act.

The Price of Love

Those who claim Christ’s sacrifice will one day be a part of God’s eternal family. They will celebrate their sonship with the King of the Universe forever. At this point it is interesting to note that during their physical life God NEVER totally abandoned them. Even in their sinful state God was mindful of them. The scriptures tell us that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), and that God so loved the world that he offered the life of His beloved son as a ransom for sin (Jn. 3:16, I Tim. 2:6). The point here is that when God’s eternal Kingdom is finally established (Rev. 21) Jesus Christ will be the only one in it to have experienced TOTAL REJECTION from the Father. For all eternity this one fact will set Him apart from all others. This was the price He was willing to pay for the salvation of His Father’s children.

A Great Tragedy

The real tragedy with respect to Christ’s sacrifice is that some will actually refuse to claim it. As a result, the sin that Jesus took upon Himself on their behalf will be conveyed back to them and they will have to pay the price for their own transgressions. Hence, they will once again be estranged from the Father. In that state, God will REJECT them—and turn His back in disgust. Furthermore, the scriptures shout out this truth.

Everlasting Contempt

The great prophet Daniel once wrote of God's final judgment on man. When doing so he revealed that there were two types of resurrections—one for those who are redeemed and another for those who are condemned. Notice his description of these resurrections.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:2)

This is indeed a dark pronouncement. However, it graphically conveys how God truly sees those who are cast into the lake of fire. Consider what is being said here. The word "shame" comes from the Hebrew term *cherpah* (Strong's H2781) and means "a reproach" and "disgrace." It pertains to the sin the defiant must bear in judgment. There is NO mercy or compassion here. As was stated earlier, God's mercy and compassion are only expressed in redemption, NEVER in CONDEMNATION.

We now come to the state of "everlasting contempt" referred to by Daniel. The word "contempt" is translated from the Hebrew *dera'own* (Strong's H1860) and means "averse, abhorrent, and repulsive." The contempt spoken of by Daniel is GOD'S CONTEMPT. God doesn't love those whom He has condemned. He ABHORS them. In their defiant, sinful state, they are vile to Him—and so is everything and everyone who consciously sets their will toward EVIL. There is nothing merciful or loving about God's treatment of such people. They are regarded as filth and discarded as worthless. For the human family the result is death (Ro. 6:23).

The bottom line is this. If God would forsake His own Son why would anyone think He wouldn't forsake those who would hold that sacrifice in contempt?

Conclusion:

In the beginning I related a story about counterfeit money. I would like to conclude by asking you a question. It is a serious question so think hard.

Question: Do you know what the difference is between a counterfeit and that which is real?

Answer: The counterfeit is worthless. And so is the idea that God would find any value in it.

In order to truly come out of sin and put it out of our lives we must despise the shame of it. We must see it as VILE and REPULSIVE. We must see it as Jesus saw it. It is only then that we will be able to fully appreciate what occurred at a place called Golgotha nearly 2000 years ago.