

# Things God Hates



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Hate is a very strong word that expresses intense hostility and dislike. Synonyms for hate (from Merriam-Webster's on-line dictionary) such as: abhor, abominate, despise, detest, loathe, help us gain a deeper appreciation for this emotion. Often it is used to express the exact opposite of love.

Typically a discussion of "hate" would center on biblical commands and rationale for Christians to rid ourselves of this sinful attitude. In His very first public sermon, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father

*who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."* Mt 5:43-45 The Apostle John wrote, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3:15 Again he wrote, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4:20-21 Clearly hatred is inconsistent with Christianity and we must culti-

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vate the “agape” love of God (John 3:16) in our lives.

However, In this publication issue instead of dwelling on the sin of personal hatred, we want to focus on things God hates. Too often we hate \_\_\_\_\_, and that typically centers on some particular person. On the other hand, God has identified sinful attitudes and actions that He abhors.

When He goes to the trouble of identifying things He hates, we would do well to understand exactly what these are and avoid them at all costs.

You may be familiar with Proverbs 6:16-19 which reads, *“There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: (1) haughty eyes, (2) a lying tongue, (3) and hands that shed innocent blood, (4) a heart that devises wicked plans, (5) feet that run rapidly to evil, (6) a false witness who utters lies, (7) and one who spreads strife among brothers.”* (numbers added for clarity) This concise listing illustrates the focus of this issue. Articles that follow explore each of these seven, along with three additional examples of despicable sins. Once again, our objective is to highlight these sins that are an abomination to God and help us make these an abomination to us as well.

The ten sins we’ve selected don’t constitute an exhaustive list, in fact there are over 40 things in the Scriptures identified as detestable to God. For instance other abominable sins include: Homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 1 Cor 6:9-11), witchcraft and sorcery (Deut 18:10), justifying the wicked and condemning the righteous (Prov 17:15), dishonesty (Deut 25:13-16), and an item that’s been in our news lately, transvestitism (Deut 22:5), along with many more.

There’s a Latin term sometimes associated with business transactions called, *“caveat emptor.”* This term is loosely defined as “let the buyer beware” and expresses the idea that one party to a bargain may be at an information disadvantage in the transaction and needs to be particularly vigilant to ensure that

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he isn't hoodwinked with shoddy merchandise. God doesn't want us to be at an information disadvantage in our spiritual lives. In fact He plainly tells us what He considers to be sinfully shoddy. Few if any of us sets out to buy the poorest quality merchandise; similarly let's not set out to commit or inadvertently stumble into loathsome sins that infuriate our God.

I'm reminded of Paul's sobering thoughts in Romans chapter 1: *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Rom 1:18-25*

Few of us intentionally seeks to "irk" the Creator of the universe, but often we have help. *"Our adversary, the devil, prowls*

*about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* 1 Pet 5:8 Beginning with Eve in the Garden, he insidiously tempts and eggs us on to rebel, to elevate and serve ourselves; wasn't Eve enticed to "become like God?" (Gen 3:5) Peter continued his warning with, *"but resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."* 1 Pet 5:9

God wasn't pleased with Israel following their Egyptian bondage and, *"they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, " THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."* 1 Cor 10:5b-13

Saul of Tarsus was told, *"It is hard for you to kick against the goads."* Acts 26:14 Likewise, it's not smart to poke God in the eye.

## Haughty Eyes

Fred Chance

Haughty. I ask my granddaughter what this word means, her reply was "I don't know." She is not alone there are a lot of people that are in the same boat. Sad to say many are members of the family of God. This word is found fifteen times in the Bible. The dictionary tells us that being haughty is one that is "disdainfully proud, snobbish, scornfully arrogant, supercilious, lofty or noble." In Isaiah 3:16 *"Moreover the Lord saith, 'Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wonton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a tinkling with their feet.'" Have you ever met someone that is like that? I have, and let me hasten to say that this is not a person one likes to be around. In the New Testament the word is not found, but we are told in Luke 20:46, "Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts." These men would not even touch a burden with their little finger to help other people, but they wanted to appear holy before men. The highest seats were the place of honor. They wanted to be greeted with titles of honor in public places. These people were haughty. Jesus Christ condemns this kind of person. This is one of the things that God hates. In the NIV version of the Bible James 2:1-4 tells us, "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man*

*in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine cloths and say 'Here is a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'Ye stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" Here we find that God is not a respecter of persons and we must not be as well. (Acts 10:34) It was the custom of the Christians to meet on the first day of the week to worship God. Christians should make no distinction between rich people and poor people who come to the worship services of God. As a child of God we must treat all people the same, with love and kindness. We are not to be a respecter of persons. God accepted poor people, but rich people oppressed them. One has only to visit some of our modern courts today to see the disparity and treatment of rich people and poor people. The name of Christ is blasphemed and disgraced by those who do not accord Christian treatment to fellow human beings. James 2:10 tells us, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Here we find that a respecter of persons is guilty of the whole law. God, who gave one commandment, gave other commands also. If we break one, you sin against the Lawgiver. It is not stated in the Bible that if we break one command , we might as well go ahead and break all the others, nor is it stated that it is just as bad to break one commandment as to break all of them. It is taught though that if we break one commandment, we are in rebellion to God. It has to do with one's attitude. The same is true in regards to being haughty. A bad attitude is going to keep a lot of souls out of Heaven. Think on these things.*

## A Lying Tongue

Gary Mangus

A “lying tongue” can be defined as a person who is willing to speak a falsehood of any kind. A simple definition of a lie is “a false statement deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood.”

Some types of lies are: Lying to gain money, a favor, an award, or try to position oneself to be better than another. Lying about ourselves or something to deceive others will cause damage to ourselves. Soon the lie or lies will be found out and people will know that you lied. Proverbs 21:6 has this to say about this type of lie: *“The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.”*

Lying about another person before others not only deceives but it affects that other person’s reputation and can cause significant damage to that person. Lying about another person is the sin of bearing false witness and also is sixth in the list of things that God hates in Proverbs 6:16-19.

When we give our word that we will do something, but have no intention of doing it, it is a lie. If we speak the truth, our word should mean something. When we make a commitment to a neighbor, co-worker, a friend, our family, a fellow Christian, and especially to God; we need to ensure first that we can do it, before making the commitment.

For example, if we tell someone we will call them back tomorrow, yet we have no intention of calling, then we have lied. However, if we really intended to call, but was unable to do so due to circumstances, then

when we call back later saying, “I was so busy, I really meant to call . . .” In this case we technically did not lie. However if this becomes a pattern for us, then we need to choose our words carefully when we make commitments. Instead it would have been better to say something like this, “I will *try* to call you back tomorrow.” When we say things in haste, we can easily fall into telling lies as Proverbs 10:19 states: *“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”*

When commitments or vows are made to God, there should be no delay in paying them. We are warned in Deuteronomy 23:21-23: *“If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.”*

Giving praise or saying someone is good at something when you know it is false is a lie. If you listen to the world, they will say a white lie is better than telling the truth and everyone does it. For example, if you compliment Mary, about “How pretty her hair looks today!” when you don’t believe it, you may hurt Mary because she does not believe you! Instead we need to get to know her better so that we can say things we know are the truth about her. If we don’t have anything to say with love and truthfulness, then we would be better off not saying anything! Proverbs 26:28 provides this gem of wisdom: *“A lying tongue hates its victims,*

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*and a flattering mouth works ruin.”*

Making a statement about God, Jesus, or the Gospel, that cannot be supported by Scripture is a false teaching. Paul warns in Galatians 1:6-8, *“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but; See there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”* In 1 Timothy 1:3-7 Paul urged Timothy *“. . . to charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”*

The resulting destruction and bad consequence from telling a lie can be great! An interesting example is in Genesis 3:3-6, that the first lie recorded in the bible was not done by Adam or Eve. But by the cunning serpent deceiving Eve by telling her *“You will not surely die”* and *“you will be like God knowing good and evil”* when she eats fruit of the tree that God told her not to eat. Being deceived by the lie, Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Adam also ate the fruit and thus sin was

introduced into the world. As a direct consequence of this sin, we know that our physical body will die and spiritual death is also possible if we are not faithful. Like the serpent, if we tell lies we can impact others and may cause them to sin.

Unfortunately we learn to lie at an early age from just growing up. In observing my grandchildren in the last four years, they were quick to lie about things because of something they wanted or trying to avoid taking responsibility for something they did. If I asked them to stop what they like doing and clean up their room, they would say something like *“I already did it,”* or when I asked who did this, the guilty one would say, *“She did it, I didn’t do it.”* And they were quick to lie to each other. And often it was hard to get them to own up to telling a lie and another lie was offered to cover up the first lie. I know I learned to tell lies as a child and I received more than just a few spankings from my father for lying. I think as children get more advanced in their lies, it is harder for us as parents to tell the difference and often lies go unpunished or corrected.

Lying is like a contagious disease spreading quickly. And often the influence and stories we get from friends, media, politics, and everything the world communicates, we can’t take for face value because we find lies are being promoted instead. As we hear more and more lies, and if not careful, we can speak a lie or spread a lie in the moment. We have to watch ourselves and take notice when we tell a lie so that we can correct the lie immediately and then ask for forgiveness. The more we lie, the easier it becomes to lie again and again. At some point, we may even

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believe the lie is doing no harm and it was easy to say without much thought. And if so, we are letting too much of the world influence our heart. Jesus warns us in Matthew 12:34-35 about what comes out of our mouth, *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”* James 1:26 states, *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.”*

Therefore we should always tell the truth and fight the good fight of the faith striving for a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith!

## Hands That Shed Innocent Blood

Mark Gray

God hates the shedding of innocent blood; it is an abomination to Him. Abomination is rarely used in our vernacular today so perhaps we do not assign the proper degree of disgust the word conveys. It is so much more than merely disliking something (not caring to eat a particular vegetable perhaps). It is a thing that is loathsome, revolting, or detestable. Why would God find the shedding of blood so repulsive when the Old Testament is particularly violent? It is the *innocent* blood that is important. The

innocent are free from guilt, clean and blameless. Paul tells the Philippians to *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world . . .”* Phil 2:14-15 It is not that anyone is free from sin, but rather they try to follow God, *“live quietly, and to mind [their] own affairs.”* 1 Ths 4:11 The innocent try to love their neighbor as themselves, which Jesus calls the second greatest commandment after loving the Lord your God. (Mt 22:37-39) Paul says that, *“the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* Gal 5:14 Since this is the summation of God’s Law, logic dictates that shedding your neighbor’s innocent blood would be abhorrent to God.

Unfortunately mankind has found various reasons to shed the blood of innocents. Sometimes a jealous rage is the motivator. Cain shows this after his sacrifice is deemed unacceptable by the Lord. God Himself even asks Cain, *“Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?”* Rather than accepting God’s instruction, Cain let his anger grow until he, *“rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”* Gen 4:6-8 Solomon shows another reason that man has found to harm these innocents. He counsels: *“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot*

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*among us; we will all have one purse . . .”*  
Prov 1: 10-14 Greed for easy money and plunder spurs people like these to ambush and shed blood. Robbery has long driven mankind to violence against their neighbor. Jesus even used their ilk to show who was one’s neighbor as he told the story of a man *“going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.”* Lu 10:30 Although they did not kill the man, it seems they certainly tried to just to take his clothes and possessions. The Law provided another driving force for bloodshed: *“Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.”* Deut 27:25 Much like robbery, this is inspired by greed. Whether this person be a “hitman” or a false witness, it is condemned by Law. Judas even recognized this after he took money to betray Jesus. *“Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’”* Mt 27:3-4 Even the kings of the people were not immune as Jeremiah told Shallum (Josiah’s son), *“But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.”* Jer 22:17

Although our neighbors, our fellow man, are certainly innocent when it comes to the examples mentioned, who is more innocent than children? Some of the “darkest” times in the Old Testament involve idolatry with child sacrifice. The psalmist recounts a quick history of the Israelites in the 106<sup>th</sup> Psalm and mentions: *“They did*

*not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.”* Psa 106: 34-38 Once again even the kings were involved in this. Hezekiah’s son, King Manasseh, rebuilt the high places and altars that his father had destroyed. He got so wrapped up in idol worship that he, *“burned his son as an offering.”* 2 Kgs 21:6 Even still we as mankind have not learned from our history. Today we have exchanged Molech and other idolatrous gods for convenience and a cover for selfishness. Based on the estimated 974,000 abortions in the United States in 2014, 2668 babies are murdered every day ([www.abort73.com](http://www.abort73.com)). These children are the definition of innocence. America wants sin without consequence, and these children pay the price.

The Lord our God has shown us love, *“that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* 1 Jn 4:9-11 God loved us first. He gave us pardon from our sins with the perfect and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ. How hard is it for us to love our neighbor as reciprocation for this love? That is the reason for God’s hatred of shedding innocent blood. He *IS* love, while the murder of innocents is the antithesis of love.



## A Heart That Devises Wicked Plans

Ephriam Davis

As we approach the topic of this article, one of the many teachings of Jesus comes immediately to mind as He addressed a group of the Pharisees because He “knew their thoughts.” Mt 12:22-25 (NKJV) As He gave this discourse, He came to this very blunt statement, “*You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*” Mt 12:34 (ESV) So even in this case, the usage of the word “heart” as in most biblical instances, Jesus was not speaking of the blood pumping, involuntary muscle God designed into the chest cavity of mankind. Clearly in the overall context, Jesus was speaking to the thoughts that had filled and was so voluntarily entrenched in the minds of this group of people. Jesus goes on further in the next verse to say, “*The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*” Mt 12:35 (KNJV). While in the specific context, Jesus was addressing the fruit that originates from the heart/mind of man being manifested by “words spoken,” the fruit can also be manifested in actions. A familiar common saying heard today is, “You are what you eat,” and from a physical perspective, health care professionals seem to constantly issue warnings about illnesses related to foods that are high in cholesterol, fats, sugars, and sodium for example. The Pharisees were well known for many traditions that they had created and tried to bind

on others, including the eating of bread without having first washed hands in a certain way. (Mark 7:1-5) However, Jesus provides additional explanation and commentary to help the listener to look beyond the physical towards the higher spiritual plain. “*Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.*” Mt 15:17-20 So if all of these manifested evil actions are the fruit of the evil treasure of the heart then the question to answer is, how or where does the evil treasure come from?

All of the above listed examples of manifested actions originate with the first item on the list, and more specifically, evil thoughts. Consider God’s word concerning the progressive nature of sin, “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*” Jas 1:14-15 Consider these three well known examples in Haman, Judas, and Ananias & Sapphira. Haman for example, had a heart that was full of selfish, arrogant pride. When Mordecai, a faithful Jew refused to bow down and pay homage to

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Haman, Haman became so furious that he plotted to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all of the Jews. (Est 3:1-6) The consequence of all of Haman's exact plans ultimately fell upon him through divine providence. (Est 4, 5, 6 & 7) Judas, one the 12 apostles chosen by Jesus, who gave the impression that he cared for the poor, was actually a thief who had the money box from which he would steal. (John 12:3-6) He was ultimately motivated to conspire with the chief priests and elders to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. (Mt 26:14-16) Judas was later remorseful and desperately sought repentance, but ultimately took his own life. (Mt 27:3-10) Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, full of pride and the desire for the praise from the apostles conspired together and lied to God and the Holy Spirit about the price of a possession. (Acts 5:1-4) The consequences of these actions were physical death, and "apparently" eternal spiritual death as well, though God is the final Judge. (Acts 5:5-10)

Once again Jesus Christ taught us that, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Mt 15:19 These examples of manifested actions all originate with the first item on the list. While it would seem to be good for everything to end with, "just the evil thoughts," it is even better to strive for the spiritual growth in God's way to avoid the evil thoughts in the first place. Do we spend time praying about this? The OT inspired writer said it well, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* Psa 119:11 (KJV) The apostle Paul admonished us to meditate on the word by

saying, *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."* Phil 4:8-9

## Feet That Run Rapidly to Evil

Craig Sweet

I have had several discussions over the years regarding the origin of evil. Our world seems to be preoccupied with origins because we hear and read about it all the time. It seems that everyone wants to define evil as a physical thing or object. However, evil is not something that was created or that will be destroyed. It is not some physical object that you run to. So, what does the writer mean that God hates those who run rapidly to evil? (Prov 1:18)

Evil is a decision of one's heart when they do not follow God's commandments. The first documented case of an evil choice was made by Eve in the Garden of Eden when she decided to listen to the serpent's temptation to disobey God and eat of the forbidden tree. Satan knew exactly how to turn Eve's heart toward her evil decision. It was not Satan that did evil, it was Eve's decision that was evil. Those who ignore God's commandments are basing their lives and actions on their own heart's desires. It is no

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wonder that God hates those who make decisions to run toward evil and away from Him. So, why do people choose evil over good? There are many reasons, but let's discuss a few: guilt, fear, selfishness, and the lack of God in their life.

When Adam and Eve realized the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit, they were naked and now ashamed (Gen 2:25; 3:7). They heard God walking in the garden and hid. They knew exactly what they had done and the guilt drove them to try and run from God. Guilt and shame can control someone's life to the point where they feel there is nothing they can do except to continue to bury the guilt. Some bury it by seeking material things, or by abusing substances (alcohol, drugs, etc.) to make the guilt go away. The more they try to eliminate the guilt by using evil methods, the more the guilt will control them. The only way to remove the guilt is to turn to God for help. He will forgive those who have sinned and have confessed those sins to Him (1 Jn 1:9). When we understand that we are truly forgiven, we can forgive ourselves and begin to make the choices that God approves instead of guilt driven evil choices.

However, most have to address the fear of making a change to live for God. Worldly pressures are constantly challenging us. Some live under the fear of losing everything they have so they continue to press on for more things. Jesus warns us that if we are constantly looking for the world to provide us with acceptance, we have put our faith and trust in the treasures of the world instead of the treasures of heaven (Mt 6:19-21).

Fear can also be based upon the judgments of others. What would someone say if they found out I am a Christian? Would I still be accepted as part of the group? Would I be shunned by those who want to do non-Christian activities? It happens that we can have a lot of pressure just because of our Christian belief. The fear of not being accepted can be overwhelming for some people. Peter ran into this pressure when Christ was arrested. He denied his Lord three times due to the fear of those who might do him harm or judge him as a follower of Jesus. He wept bitterly because he let his fear cloud his judgement.

The world does not typically understand why we sometimes have to remove ourselves from activities or events because we do not wish to participate in evil and worldly things. There are so many people who feel that whatever "I" want to do, is ok. This generation has been branded the "me" generation. God is not going to drive my thoughts and desires. When we make our decisions based upon whatever we want, we have put God aside and have decided that there really is nothing evil about what I want to do. Our decisions are based upon our emotions and our feelings. We convince ourselves that God loves us and he wants us to be happy. It is sad when people use human wisdom and logic to determine what God wants. God wants us to follow Him and in doing so, we will have true happiness. Paul said, *"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the inter-*

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ests of others.” Phil 2:3-4

Selfishness can drive God out of our lives. When we remove God from our thoughts and concerns, our choices are no longer governed by His wisdom. It is so easy for anyone to slowly drift away from God. Before they know it, God is not in their life at all. The Hebrew writer stated, *“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.”* Heb 2:1 It takes a constant desire to seek God and His kingdom in order not to drift away. Taking God out of the process of our decisions will nearly always end in a situation full of regret, sorrow, and pain. Evil feeds on our thoughts when God is not in them. Paul encouraged us to think on good thoughts, *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”* Phil 4:8

In summary, God allows us to make our own decisions by granting us free will. We can choose good or evil, it is up to us. John’s encouragement summarizes what we should do, *“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.”* 3 Jn 11 Let us not be one of the people who God hates because we allow our feet to run towards evil.

## False Witness

David Parks

“An unbelieved truth can hurt a man much more than a lie. It takes great cour-

age to back truth unacceptable to our times. There's a punishment for it, and it's usually crucifixion.” — [John Steinbeck](#)

True and accurate witness is the foundation of a lawful and orderly society. God saw fit to include his prohibitions to false witness in the Ten Commandments. *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”* Ex 20:16 False witness in its simplest form is to attest to the truth of untrue facts. This could occur as the result of forethought and malice or gossip. Gossip is the most common way Christians fall into false witness. Gossip whether true or untrue should not be a part of a Christian’s life. However my point here is that there is a great danger that one who bears tales may find themselves guilty of false witness. If we attest to or lend support to facts of which we have no firsthand knowledge we may end up as a false witness. Jesus said that it is this sort of thing that defiles one. *“But Peter said to him, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ And he said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”* Mt 15:15-20

Just how bad is this false witnessing? It was the means by which our Lord was put to death. *“Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but*

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they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, 'This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.' And the high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?'" Mt 26: 59-62 Stephen was also put to death based on false witness. (Acts 6:13-14) How many lives have been taken? How many reputations ruined? How many relationships permanently damaged as a result of false witness? It is no wonder God hates a false witness. In Deuteronomy 19: 15-21 the Old Law allowed for the death penalty for bearing false witness. A false witness turns the intentions of good men to evil. The court that convicts the innocent man to prison is only trying to carry out justice. It is the false witness who turns the effort for good to injustice. False witness and gossip can also turn intentions to only follow God's words into mistreatment and division in God's family. If one is not careful of what they state as true, honest men can be lead into wrong actions.

What are we to do? First of all we are to be truth speakers. *"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."* Gal 4:15-16 There is a way to speak the truth in love and a way to speak the truth without love. If you think you know something that troubles you then only talk to the one it is about. To speak in

love is to be motivated by a genuine care for the one to which you are speaking. In Matthew 18:15-17 The Lord gives us the instruction on how to deal with a bother we have a problem with. First we talk to them one on one. However sometimes that doesn't solve the problem. Then everything must be established by multiple witnesses. This is the point of our discussion. There are to be no opinions or gossip. There is to be only established facts. Then and only then is it to be made public. God hates a false witness it is important if we are a witness we follow his instructions on the process.

Let us also not be found a false witness of God. We live in a time where the truth of the gospel is not popular. That truth is that God has revealed Himself to us in His written Word. That He has a standard of right and wrong. That man has sinned and separated himself from God and if that separation is not corrected that man will be condemned to eternal punishment. That through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ we can attain to eternal life with God. I could go on to speak of repentance, baptism and godly living but I want to talk about our witness. We are not witnesses to the gospel like the apostles who were witness of the resurrection because they were there. However we are witness to the power and truth of the word of God. We have a responsibility to speak the truth in love. This world killed Jesus because of the truth. *"Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my*

voice.' Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"  
John 18: 37-38 The world still doesn't know what truth is. We should not let our speech leave others without a truthful witness to the truth. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6

## Sowing Discord Among Brethren

Russ Ward

Proverbs 6:16 starts out with six things God hates and the verse closes with "seven that are an abomination to him." One might think that the last one was just an afterthought of the inspired writer and yet when shown in comparison we actually see how such action ranks right up with the vilest things that man can partake in. It should not be surprising in a way simply because Jehovah God is a relationship driven deity. It is shown both in his relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit and is manifested in his actions towards man whom he created and whom He has redeemed.

John recorded for us in I John 1:7 that we have fellowship with God if we are walking in the Light; he follows in chapter 2:9-10 that to be in the light one must love his brother and the one that hates his brother abides in darkness. In simplistic terms we can say that to be in a right relationship with God we must also be in a right relationship or practicing love towards brethren. Now common sense enters that a profession of love towards another can't be achieved if at the same time we are

attempting to sow seeds of discord with that same individual. The two are incompatible, for when each is exercised one is attempting to achieve different results.

Satan delights in chaos and is happy to stir the pot anytime he finds a willing and able partner to work his will. On the other hand God delights in peace which is unfortunately for man harder to achieve than the former. It boils down to selfishness. We are selfish people and selfish people do wicked things; when we get to the point that we are not successful in our selfishness, or if we think the repercussion of our selfishness is greater by exercising one of the previous six things God hates we fall back to disrupting the peace that others are trying to achieve.

Have you ever witnessed a group of children quietly playing and being together and then Bob decides that what Steve has is now his or Sally wants Bessie to play with her but Bessie is playing with Autumn, yet Sally is excluded so Sally disrupts the game and the next thing you have is pandemonium and it is everybody's fault but mine. As parents try sorting that one out; I have been there. The difference is that God views His children as those possessing a greater maturation level and so when this occurs in the adult world there is zero tolerance as it should be.

I would first like to ask some very personal questions. Is your relationship with God better than mine, is it greater than mine, is it different than mine, is it more important in the eyes of God than mine, or does it hold a greater sense of value than mine? The answer is a resounding NO!

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Consider the following questions; is your home in heaven more wonderful than mine or will it provide a greater reward? The answer again is NO!! Yet we look at what is happening on this earth and we become consumed with the things of the world (I John 2:15-17) and we find the love of the Father is not in us (i.e.... no relationship with God!) and we find that reflected in our actions. You see when it becomes about me (selfishness) then it is not about God and there is no peace because my intentions are not to sow seeds of peace. Unless I first understand whether I am being selfish, I can't determine if I am sowing the right kind of seeds. My grandmother called that sowing discord in ignorance.

Now some of us are filled with self importance, self righteousness, and all kinds of knowledge. We are the prideful sowers of discord. We won't admit that we are guilty because being filled with such self awareness we would have to know that such actions are spoken out against of such people in Proverbs. (We are good at quoting it too) Nonetheless we feel a great need to right the wrongs, the missteps, the misspoken words and comments made by others. In a valiant attempt to set the table upright so to speak, we need to make sure everyone is in the know, on the right path (As determined by ME) and that nobody within a reasonable distance of myself is left untouched. (For that would be selfish of me not to share me with everybody) Any additional discussion needed about the "I Say Uh" sower of the seeds of discord.

Unfortunately there are those who have a devilish delight in poking the hornets' nest.

They have no intent other than disruption. They find fault with everything, singing, preaching, rearing children, dress, manners, class teachers, material, times, temperature, etc . . . They either are not happy and don't want anyone else to be or they simply delight in disagreements. Empty and mindless comments or questions in bible study, controversial comments and challenges that have no part in the initial discussion, squandering and wanderings of the mind that are neither intended to exhort, influence, or impart knowledge. We become great debaters for the expressed purpose of debating or better yet we play "The devil's advocate." Not with an intent to rationally consider the truths that are being expressed, but rather to pit one or more individuals at odds with another. (Now this is truly the recipe for peace!) These are the "I'm not happy so no one else should be" sowers of the seeds of discord. They won't readily admit it but they are sad and shallow people, whose hearts may once have been receptive to the Father, but they've shut themselves off from the true joy found in Christ Jesus.

If we take a moment to reflect upon these types of people we might find that we have been in the past, are currently operating as, or even might find ourselves becoming sowers of discord. "You wanna be my friend"? Be patient, be loving, be kind, but BE DIRECT; tell me "Russ" you don't have the Love of the Father because you are sowing discord. Point it out, be decisive, hug my neck or squeeze me in a bear hug, tell me you love me, and let's get on with the Joys of being in Christ together.



## Divorce

Ron Gray

*"I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel.*" Mal 2:16 These ten words could not be any clearer; there cannot be any doubt about how God feels on this matter. However, the general population of this nation apparently disagrees with Him since nearly 50% of all marriages end in divorce.

Our society seems to like disposable things. You may have to think back several decades to remember cloth diapers, table cloths, and cloth napkins. Even dishes and silverware have vanished from some restaurants. Today when you are finished with something, you simply throw it out. Sadly, the same can be said for marriage, if you are finished with a spouse, throw her out and get a new one.

Divorce has always been a thorny issue and the Pharisees used that issue in an attempt to trap Jesus between scripture and tradition. Jesus answered by quoting passages from Genesis: *"Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."* Mt 19:4-6

A review of Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 5:31-32; and Luke 16:18 should clear up any misconceptions about marriage and divorce that may cloud our judgment. Marriage is only between one man and one woman. The two are joined by God for a life-

time; as the marriage vow says, "as long as we both shall live, till death do us part." Divorce is not an option, except for adultery committed by one of the partners. God hated divorce under the old law and Jesus shows us that there is absolutely no change in that hatred under the new dispensation.

How do two people become one? I believe that there is more to the "one flesh" than just the sexual act and more than just the fact that the children of a married couple carry the genes of both parents.

Jesus told the Jews in John chapter 10, when they questioned him, *"I and the Father are one."* This "one" represents a unity that is beyond human wisdom. They *are* one in thought, action, and purpose. The married couple *becomes* one in thought, action, and purpose. That "oneness" also seems to defy the wisdom of man.

Marriage gives a man and a woman a healthy stability in life that eludes so many others in this selfish and insecure world. There exists within that marriage a love that never gets old, but is sweeter as the years go by! That love is big enough to be shared with their children, giving them a comforting stability and a glowing example of what God intended for His children. Many of the older marriage certificates confirmed that the married couple has been "joined in Holy matrimony." The word "holy" means "set apart for a purpose." What therefore God has joined together let no man separate.

Divorce shatters all of those things. Divorce is not the surgical removal of the marriage vow or a "clean break" from alleged incompatibility. It's the equivalent of a bomb

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going off within a home. Some members of that household are devastated; some are permanently injured; all are *scarred* for life! Even a new spouse who takes a place within that “house of divorce” bears the burdens created by the devastation and deals with the aftermath of destruction.

Stability for the children is hard to maintain in a household that is rocked by divorce.

Children of divorce suffer greatly. They are bounced between a father and a mother who no longer love each other and often have to adapt to step-parents. They see contempt hidden just below the surface between parents whom they love and are helpless to do anything to make it better. New step-parents are seen as “outsiders” who intrude on the only lives that the kids have ever known. A “tug of war” may breakout over the affections of the children.

In light of these things, those who are not married should ask before looking to marry, “Can I as a Christian be truly ‘one’ with this person? What will that ‘oneness’ look like over time?” – Those who are married, take a look at Philippians 2:1-4. This is not addressed solely to married people. It is written to all Christians, but the thoughts addressed here by the inspired writer can sweeten any marriage when taken to heart.

All married couples have “problems.” So, don’t feel all alone when you do. The difference between those whose marriages endure and those who are on rocky ground can be seen in how the husband and wife handle those problems *together*. When a Christian married couple has “problems” that are shaking the marriage, knowing God’s view on marriage and divorce can force them to care-

fully think things through and cause them to “work out their salvation with fear and trembling.” Yes, Jesus gave *one* reason to divorce; and that one reason is because of a sheer betrayal of love. None of us should consider that to be an easy way to hit the “reset” button. It may very well be needed by a Christian and some have had to take that exit, but a Christian is not immune to the difficulties and pains that we have discussed before. This exit that Jesus allows can free us from an adulterous spouse, but going through this is as pleasant as a pilot ejecting from a crashing jet; it is traumatic.

Can you imagine why a loving God would hate such a destructive “solution” to the inability of a man and a woman, to live up to the vows that they have made before His eyes? When you think deeply on these things, can you join Him in saying, “I hate divorce.”

## Festivals and Feasts

Carol Fertig

Soon after God brought the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He gave Moses explicit instructions for His people to worship Him. The Law He gave to Moses at this time concerned itself with every aspect of His people’s lives: dietary, medical, social, religious. Rules governing offerings, sacrifices, and feasts, as well as laws for the other areas of life, were laid out in Exodus 23:14-19, Leviticus 7:37-38, and Leviticus 23, as well as in other locations in the Old Testament. It was imperative that the people of Israel obey these laws because God was creating a pure and holy nation of people to be

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His own. Their obedience would be manifest in their performance of these statutes. God reminded Moses over and over that, *"I am the Lord your God."* (Lev 19:4 and others) and that He established the solemn purpose and procedure for the performance of these rituals. At the end of the giving of the Law and the reading of it to the people, God's people replied *". . . And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.'"* Ex 24:3b

How, then, in a matter of around 700 years later, could God say to His people through His prophet Isaiah, *"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them?"* Isa 1:14 Amos also says from God, *"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies."* Amos 5:21 These things had been at the very heart of the Law God gave Moses for His people. It isn't that they had ceased performing the services required altogether, but something was definitely amiss here! The Israelites were complying with the Law, but something was wrong.

Jeremiah explained later in Jeremiah 6:13ff that the lives of all the people were full of iniquity: greedy for unjust gain, false dealing, no shame in doing abominable things, leaving the pathway of the Lord. The Lord said through Jeremiah, *"Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!' – only to go on doing all these*

*abominations?"* Jer 7:9-10 Jesus named this sort of behavior as hypocrisy in the New Testament in Matthew 23 with all the "Woes" directed to the Pharisees. Of the seven woes pronounced against the Pharisees in Jesus' sermon, six of them are addressed to "hypocrites." In the seventh pronouncement in Matthew 23:16 they are called *"blind guides."* Jesus called them hypocrites because they were preaching one thing but doing another, holding themselves to a different and lower standard than that of their brothers. In verse 23 He says the hypocritical Pharisees *"have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness."* He said they should have had these qualities active in their lives without neglecting the dictates of the Law. One of the best word pictures in all Jesus' teachings is that of the Pharisees who *". . . are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness."* Mt 23:27b The inner person, the heart, was not right, either in the Israelites of the Old Testament, or in the Pharisees of the New.

When King Saul did not obey God in destroying the Amalekites completely, Samuel said to him, *"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams!"* I Sam 15:22 David understood this well when he said: *"In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O*

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*my God; your law is within my heart.” Psa 40:6-8 In Psalm 51 David asks for a clean heart because he knows “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Solomon also spoke of this matter in Proverbs 21:2-3 “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” God looks into our hearts and sees past our actions into the spiritual motivation for them.*

The feasts and sacrifices of the Old Law have been replaced with a new sort of sacrifice for those of us living in the current dispensation. Our sacrifices are spiritual: *“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* 1 Pet 2:5 We offer our bodies (Rom 12:1) as a living sacrifice. We offer praise and acts of goodness and sharing (Heb 13:15-16; Phil 4:18) We offer our prayers (Rev 5:8) and our worship. Above all God requires of us just what He required of the Israelites in the Old Testament under the Law of Moses: obedience from the heart. Studying to know the will of God is vital to making our sacrifices acceptable; then we can do what the Hebrew writer urges us to do in Hebrews 12:28-29: *“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”* We don’t want our sacrifices to become a burden to Him as the sacrifices of the Israelites did. Hypocritical worship has never been and will never be acceptable to our Lord.

## The Deeds of the Nicolaitans

Steven D. Baxley

A group known as the Nicolaitans is mentioned twice in the Book of Revelation, once in reference to the church in Ephesus which rejected them and is praised for that rejection (2:6) and once in reference to the church in Pergamum, which tolerated their teachings and is condemned for that toleration (2:15). In Revelation 2:6, Jesus simply says: *“you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”* Thus we see another item listed in the Scriptures as something that God (Jesus) hates: the deeds and teachings of this heretical group of believers.

There is very little that can be known with absolute certainty about what this group taught and practiced. Since they are mentioned in close proximity to those who held the teaching of Balaam, it has been conjectured that their ideas were similar to those in this other group (eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing sexual immorality – see Revelation 2:14). Balaam was the prophet in the Old Testament that taught the enemies of Israel how to entrap and snare Israel in sin (see Numbers 24 and 31). In favor of this theory is that so much of the message of the Book of Revelation is meant to remind Christians of the danger of compromising with the rampant idolatry and its affiliated practices in the pagan world. What is important to remember is that those receiving the Book of Revelation knew exactly what this group was and what they taught. The praise for the stance in Ephesus and the condemnation of the tolerance of Perga-

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mum would have been very clear to those in Ephesus and Pergamum, and undoubtedly to all the Christians living in Asia Minor.

It is important to note that what can be said here (and what is said) concerning this group, both their teaching and their practices, is that it was detestable to God. Jesus simply said: "I also hate" these deeds. This demonstrates God's attitude towards those who corrupt the Gospel of Christ and lead others into practices contrary to His word. God hates the deeds of those who do this.

The Scriptures are replete with instances where God makes His attitude clear. A good example is found in Galatians 1:8-9:

*"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."*

This is incredibly strong language; in fact, it is repeated twice for emphasis. The word "accursed" is translated from a Greek word which means: "someone delivered over to divine wrath *curse, one accursed*" (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament). Paul expresses great concern over the saints in Galatia having been so quickly moved from following the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a false and different teaching, and pronounces a strong curse on those who lead them to this.

Jesus also expresses this attitude elsewhere. Take for example what is recorded in Luke 17:1-2:

*"And he said to his disciples, 'Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.'"*

It would be better to be dead, than to be guilty of leading God's people into sin. This principle was true under the Law of Moses, and it is true under the Law of Christ. God takes the purity of His people (both in teaching and practice) very seriously, and takes a serious, stern, and condemning attitude towards any who would corrupt it.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that God hates the deeds (and expects the teaching to be rejected), but doesn't hate the person committing the deed. This is a distinction that is often lost by imperfect humans, but one that needs to be constantly remembered. The same love that motivated God to sacrifice His Son motivates Him to accept back those who turn from their wickedness in true repentance. As long as people remain in rebellion to God, they stand under the curse of His judgment. As soon as they surrender to His will, they can expect forgiveness and the blessing of no longer being His enemies.

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