



The Second Curse

David Clayton



THE ORIGINAL CURSE

There were two curses that came upon humanity as a consequence of sin. This is not something which is widely understood, however careful examination of the Bible reveals this truth. Christ's sacrifice broke the power of these two curses. The original curse came upon humanity in the Garden of Eden as a result of the disobedience of Adam. Paul speaks of this curse and says,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Romans 5:12).

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Rom 5:18-19)

Notice that this condemnation came

upon all men and it was exclusively the work of Adam. It was Adam's offence which resulted in all being condemned. Adam's choice broke the relationship between God and humanity which was the source of all life and goodness. In that moment, humanity was plunged into a state of separation, a spiritual death which arose from the fact that mankind was cut off from the source of life. As a result of this all humans are born in a state of carnality, enslaved to sin and helpless to resist its demands. All were made sinners by this first sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. This is the essence of the first curse.

AN ADDITIONAL CURSE

So the first curse came upon the entire human race and was the consequence of the choice of one man. The second curse, however, comes upon each person individually and is the consequence of the personal choice of each individual to disobey the will of God. In a sense, this is also the consequence of Adam's original curse because Adam separated us from God and every person separated from God is bound live a life of disobedience and rebellion against God, he cannot do otherwise.

However, while the first curse stemmed from a broken relationship, the second curse arose from a broken law. Concerning this second curse, the apostle Paul writes,

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on

a tree: (Gal 3:13)

Notice, Paul refers to this curse as the, "curse of the law." This is different from the first curse. In the first curse, the fall of Adam cursed humanity by introducing sin into human nature, but the law brought the second curse by placing requirements upon men which they, in themselves were incapable of obeying. When they disobeyed these requirements, they were cursed by a sentence of death, the penalty for disobeying the law.

The question of course, is, why did God give man the law and command him to keep it if in truth, it became a means of adding a second curse to the human race? The apostle Paul explains in Romans 7:13 where he tells us that the purpose of the law, was to make sin "exceedingly sinful"

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Rom 7:13)

In others words, the main purpose of the law was to cause each person to become aware of the power of sin, and

Also in this issue:

God's Sovereignty.....	4
Revelation and the Feasts	5
Reflections on Job's crisis	6
Why Trials	7
An Orange a Day	10

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

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to make men know how powerless they are to resist its power by themselves. By the commandment, sin becomes “exceedingly sinful.” Through the law we develop a greater awareness of the power of sin working in us, and this makes us acutely aware of our need for a Savior. This second curse serves to teach us that righteousness cannot come from our behavior. If our hearts are not changed, trying to obey rules is really an act of hopelessness, it is futile. It has no power to either make us better, or to bring us closer to God. The law, while holy and just, serves only as a mirror, reflecting our sin and revealing our need for grace. Here we see the clear truth: the law’s purpose is not to save but to convict, to drive us to Christ, where true salvation is found.

THE LAW AND THE SECOND PROBLEM

The law was introduced into the experience of humanity at Mount Sinai. Paul says it “entered” (Rom 5:20), and by this he means that it became a part of God’s plan in the process of redeeming humanity.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Rom 5:20)

When God gave the law, He created a second problem and this was something which he deliberately did. Man already had a problem with his carnal, perverted nature inherited from Adam, a problem which disqualified all men for eternal life, but now God created another problem by means of the law, this was a legal problem. Now man was condemned, not only because of his corrupted nature, but also because he was guilty of breaking the law. Now he had a legal problem in addition to the problem of his nature.

Thus, the law serves to “legalize” the problem of sin, turning what was once a natural separation from God into a conscious, accountable act of disobedience. By giving the law, God brought humanity’s sinful nature into sharper focus, revealing our inability to keep His standards. This new problem, this “curse of the law,” shows us the depth of our need for a Savior. As the law exposes our sin, it creates an awareness of guilt that drives us to seek redemption. This is why Paul describes the law as a “schoolmaster” that leads us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). The law is not the solution; it is the signpost pointing us to the solution. By emphasizing the severity of sin, the law prepares us for the grace that is available only through Christ.

LAW MISCONCEPTIONS

To produce righteousness

Many misunderstand the purpose of the law, believing it to be a path to righteousness or a means of defining goodness. There are places in Scripture which seem to support this idea, places such as Deuteronomy 6:25 which says,

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. (Deut 6:25)

But can we really obtain righteousness by obeying the commandments? There are other Bible passages which

tell us something completely different. For example, look at what the apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:21.

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Gal 2:21)

So should we conclude, that the Bible contradicts itself? Not at all. The first statement from Deuteronomy was a part of the system of the Old Covenant in which God established a relationship with the nation of Israel which was focused on how they performed, how well they lived in obedience to the law. This was not a system which could ever produce righteousness, it could never provide eternal life, but it put the people in a position where they tried to keep the law to the best of their abilities. Yet, as we have seen, it never worked, they were never able to keep it because the law was never intended to produce righteousness; it was meant to reveal our lack of it.

To define righteousness

Some also believe that the law was given as a document by which we could have a perfect definition of righteousness. This idea seems to be supported by passages such as the following:

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. (Ps 119:142)

It is true that by examining the Ten Commandments we may obtain a superficial concept of what is right and wrong, but true righteousness cannot be defined by a set of rules, a series of instructions telling us what to do, or not to do. True righteousness can only be understood when we obtain a genuine understanding of the character and goodness of God. We cannot attain to that character by obedience to rules, this is why righteousness can only be a gift, given by God, because righteousness is His own nature and character. This is not something we can work for, but is something which we can only obtain from Him as a gift. God’s great plan was that this righteousness would be provided for all who would believe, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jer 23:5-6)

To define sin

So then, it is clear that the law cannot produce righteousness, neither is it adequate to define righteousness. But is it not a means by which we can define sin? Can we not come to a proper understanding of what sin is by examining the law. Romans 7:7 does seem to teach that such a thing is true.

. . . . I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (Rom 7:7)

But if the law cannot define righteousness, how can it define the opposite thing, which is sin? As we have seen, the problem of sin goes back to the first curse which involved a separation from God, resulting in all humans being in a state of sin, carnal and alienated from God. It had nothing to do with man's behavior, but with man's state. As with many verses in the Bible, Romans 7:7 is also misunderstood by many.

When Paul says, "I had not known sin, but by the law," the rest of the passage explains what he means. In Romans chapter 7, Paul explains that sin is a power dwelling within him which compels him to do the things which are contrary to his will. He explained,

Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (Rom 7:17)

How did Paul come to know about this enemy living within him which he identified as "sin that dwelleth in me?" It was by means of the law that he made the discovery. The law came into his life and instructed him to do certain things, to behave a certain way, but he found himself incapable of obeying those instructions. It was then that he came to recognize that there was an

enemy living inside of him, an enemy which he identified as "sin." How did he make this discovery? It was the law that led to it, this is why he said, "I would not have known sin but by the law." The law was the tool that enabled him to discover the enemy. In this way, the law was a schoolmaster which made him turn to Christ for help. This is the meaning of Romans 7:7. It is not saying that the law gives us a complete definition of sin.

A DIVINE SOLUTION

Before continuing, let us remind ourselves of the role of the law. We might ask why God would introduce a standard He knew we could not keep. Paul explained,



Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

The law was given not to cure sin but to diagnose it, to make us acutely aware of the depth of our need for grace. In this way, the law is like a doctor's diagnosis—a painful but necessary revelation that points us toward healing.

This truth can be compared to the experience of physical ailments such as prostatitis or even cancer. A man may ignore the discomfort of prostatitis for years, convincing himself it's a minor issue. But when it escalates to cancer, he's forced to confront his condition and seek a cure. In a similar way, most people will never consider the reality that they have an inborn moral problem, inherited from Adam. However, the

law confronts us with the reality of our sin problem, revealing the truth that we are suffering from a condition that we have no ability to deal with ourselves. This realization pushes us toward the only cure—Christ. Thus, the law serves to give us a diagnosis, compelling us to acknowledge our need for salvation.

By "legalizing" the problem of sin, the law puts us in a place where we now become guilty for our transgression. Sin is no longer just something we inherited; it becomes a behavior for which we are held accountable. This awareness of guilt is what drives us to seek help, to turn to the One who alone can bridge the gap between us and God.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

The curse of the law then, the second curse, came upon humanity in the wisdom of God, as a means of leading us to Christ.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

The role of the law was never to save anyone but to convict, guiding us to the realization that we need a Savior. Once we find our righteousness in Him, the law has fulfilled its purpose. In Christ, we are brought into a relationship with God that far exceeds the limitations of the law. We are no longer under the law's condemnation; instead, we live in the grace that flows from our restored relationship with God. So in this sense, the law is the beginning, not the end, of our spiritual journey. It serves to lead us to Christ, the source of true righteousness.

TRUST AND RELATIONSHIP

So then, as we contemplate these two curses—the curse of broken relationship and the curse of broken law—we find that the solution to both is found in Christ. The law reveals our need, convicting us of sin and leading us to seek a Savior. But it is faith, not the law, that brings us into relationship with God, fulfilling our deepest need and restoring us to the life for which we were created.

Continued on page 9

God's Sovereignty



In this article we take a look at a topic that has been the subject of much discussion: the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God and human free will are two foundational concepts that often appear to be in conflict. On one hand, the Bible emphasizes God's absolute authority and power over all creation. On the other, it affirms human beings as free agents capable of making choices that shape their eternal destinies. How do these two truths coexist?

SUPREME AUTHORITY

To say that God is sovereign means that He possesses supreme power and authority. As the Creator and Sustainer of all things, God's will is ultimate and His purposes cannot be overruled. Nebuchadnezzar, after experiencing God's discipline, expressed this beautifully:

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou?'" (Daniel 4:35).

This understanding of sovereignty underscores that God is actively working out His plan in history. Events like the flood, the Exodus, and the coming of Jesus Christ

happened precisely at the time ordained by God, revealing His control over both the timing and the outcome of His purposes.

THE POWER TO CHOOSE

While God is sovereign, Scripture also affirms that humans are endowed with free will—the ability to make meaningful choices. This is seen in passages like Joshua 24:15, where Joshua challenges the Israelites:

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Similarly, in the New Testament, the call to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31) illustrates the responsibility of individuals to respond to God's invitation. However, free will does not mean that everything is under our control. Human choice is limited by our nature, our circumstances, and, most significantly, our inability to fulfill God's requirements without His enabling power.

PREDESTINATION'S CHALLENGE

A few years ago, we had an encounter with two brothers who joined our fellowship. They held to a belief known as predestination, a doctrine often associated with John Calvin and some Baptist traditions. This belief teaches that God, in His sovereignty, predetermines who will be saved and who will be lost. According to this doctrine, human beings have no true freedom to choose God; everything is preordained by Him.

Predestination presents a troubling picture of God. If He ordains some to be lost without giving them a choice, this challenges our understanding of His goodness. The doctrine becomes even more troubling when coupled with the belief in an eternally burning hell. Imagine a God who creates

people, denies them the freedom to choose, and then condemns them to eternal torment. Such a portrayal of God is difficult to reconcile with the loving and merciful nature of the Creator revealed in Scripture.

Most of us, however, adhere to the belief in free choice—the idea that God, in His wisdom and love, grants every person the freedom to choose their path.

CHOICE AND SALVATION

Ultimately, our destiny lies in our own hands—a reality made possible by God's grace. Every person is invited to accept the gift of salvation, but the decision must come from within. It is a decision that cannot be forced or predetermined by anyone, not even God.

The Bible assures us that God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). This demonstrates His loving nature and the freedom He grants to His creation. It also underscores the importance of making a conscious and intentional decision to follow Him.

While we affirm the reality of free choice, we must also acknowledge its mysteries. Why do two people, raised under identical circumstances, make vastly different choices—one choosing to follow Christ and the other rejecting Him? This is a question we may never fully understand.

Freedom of choice is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity, but it comes with responsibility. Each person's decisions shape their eternal destiny. Yet, even under ideal conditions, such as the case of Cain and Abel, human choices can vary greatly. One brother chose to follow God, while the other succumbed to evil.

This reality demonstrates the complexity of human decision-making

Continued on page 11

Revelation and the feast days

The book of Revelation, with its vivid imagery and deep symbolism, draws heavily on the Hebrew sanctuary and its practices. Many of its scenes reflect aspects of the Old Testament sanctuary system, which was designed by God to reveal His plan of salvation and the ultimate deliverance from sin. This connection between Revelation and the Hebrew sanctuary can be seen in key elements such as the seven burning lamps, the slain Lamb, the offering of incense, and the altar in heaven. These elements are not only symbolic but also point to the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A DIVINE TIMETABLE

God's plan for the salvation of humanity is encapsulated in the seven feasts given to Israel in the Old Testament. These feasts, as outlined in Leviticus 23, were more than mere traditions; they were prophetic events that occurred at specific times in God's divine timetable. They are a shadow of things to come, with each feast corresponding to a significant aspect of Christ's work for the salvation of mankind.

The first four feasts — Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost — were fulfilled during the early church age, marking Christ's first coming and the establishment of His kingdom. The final three feasts — the Blowing of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles — are yet to be fulfilled and point to the end of time and Christ's second coming.

THE SEVEN "P" WORDS

To better understand the significance of these feasts, seven words beginning with the letter "P" help to explain the work of Christ in relation to each feast. These words correspond to the aspects of sin that Christ deals with in the course of human history:

1. SIN'S PENALTY

Passover marks the moment when

Christ, the Lamb of God, took on Himself the penalty for sin through His sacrificial death. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb spared the Israelites from death in Egypt, so Christ's blood spares us from eternal death.

2. SIN'S PATHWAY

Unleavened Bread represents the pathway of sanctification. Just as leaven was removed from the homes of the Israelites during the feast, Christ removes the corrupting influence of sin from our lives, calling us to walk in purity.

3. SIN'S PARTITION

The Feast of Firstfruits points to Christ's resurrection, which broke the partition between humanity and God. Through Christ's resurrection, the firstfruits of redeemed humanity were brought into the presence of God, symbolizing the ultimate victory over death and the restoration of fellowship with the Creator.

4. SIN'S POWER

Pentecost, the feast of the first harvest, symbolizes the empowering of God's people by the Holy Spirit. On this day, the Spirit was poured out on the early church, breaking the power of sin and enabling believers to live in victory.

5. SIN'S PRESSURE (PARALYSIS)

The Blowing of Trumpets signals the awakening of God's people from their slumber. It represents the final call to liberation from the pressure of this world. It is a time of final awakening, a time when God's people are empowered by the Spirit to stand firm in faith.

6. SIN'S POLLUTION

The Day of Atonement represents the final cleansing of God's people from the pollution of sin. This day, marked by fasting and repentance, foreshadows the final work of Christ in blotting out the sins of His people, purifying them once and for all.

7. SIN'S PRESENCE

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates the presence of God with His people. It points forward to the time when Christ will bring His people into His eternal presence, where they will dwell with Him in the new heavens and new earth. This final feast is a celebration of the full restoration of humanity, with sin's presence forever removed.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

The feasts form a divinely orchestrated timeline of salvation. Passover, marking the beginning of the year for the Israelites, is the starting point of God's plan of redemption. Through the death of the Lamb, sin's penalty is paid, and humanity's journey toward restoration begins. The final feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, occurs at the end of the year and represents the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise — the restoration of His people to His presence, in a new creation where they will live with Him forever.

THE SCAPEGOAT

The Day of Atonement, a solemn occasion of confession and cleansing, includes the ritual of the scapegoat. On this day, the high priest would place the sins of the people upon a goat, which would then be sent into the wilderness. This ritual pointed to the ultimate removal of sin first, by the death of one goat referred to as "the Lord's goat, and secondly by the symbolic placing of the sins on the head of a second goat, referred to as "Azazel," or more commonly as "the scapegoat." In Revelation, we see the scapegoat fulfilled not in a goat, but in Satan, the one who is ultimately responsible for sin. The book of Revelation describes the binding of Satan and his eventual judgment, as he is cast into the abyss for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-2), completing the removal of sin from God's creation.

Continued on page 12

Reflections on Job's Crisis

Cliff Hunter

The story of Job, embedded in the ancient tapestry of biblical wisdom, is not merely a narrative about suffering but a profound commentary on the frailty of human understanding in the presence of a supreme, divine architect. When Job, amidst his anguish, cursed the day of his birth and renounced the very nourishment that sustained his life, he tapped into a deep despair that resonates with anyone who has faced the crushing weight of unexplained suffering. Yet, this moment was not just about Job's pain—it was a pivotal confrontation between human fragility and the incomprehensible workings of an Almighty God.

A CHALLENGE TO EXISTENCE

Imagine the scene: Job, once the epitome of human prosperity and righteousness, sits on the ground, covered in excruciating sores inflicted by Satan. His wealth is gone, his children are dead, his body is ravaged, and his friends offer nothing but hollow platitudes. In this pit of despair, Job's lament is not a mere cry for relief but a precise curse upon the foundations of his existence. He questions the very purpose of his life, the logic of his creation, and the value of his being.

In cursing the day of his birth, Job was not sinning—his lament was born of pain, not rebellion. Yet, his words pierced the heart of God, who had upheld Job as a beacon of integrity in a sin-corrupted world. To see Job's suffering was already a sorrow to God, for the Creator feels deeply for His creation. But to hear Job curse his life with such precision, to see him grapple with the unseen, unfathomable complexity of existence and reject it, was a sorrow too deep for God to ignore.

A DIVINE PERSPECTIVE

God's reply to Job is one of the most awe-inspiring passages in all of Scripture. "Where were you when I laid the

earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!" (Job 38:4-5). These words are not a rebuke in the traditional sense; they are an invitation to Job—and to all humanity—to step outside the confines of human understanding and glimpse the vastness of God's work.

God does not provide Job with a straightforward explanation for his suffering. Instead, He unveils the grandeur of creation: the mysteries of the stars, the boundaries of the sea, the cycles of life, and the intricate balance of the natural world. By doing so, God reminds Job of his place within a universe so complex, so interconnected, that no human mind could hope to grasp its full scope.

This was not God diminishing Job's significance but placing it in the proper context. Job's life, like ours, was a thread in the immense tapestry of existence—a tapestry woven with infinite care by a divine hand. To curse one's existence without understanding its purpose is to judge a masterpiece by a single, unfinished brushstroke.

HUMANITY'S VIEW OF ITSELF

Job's lament reflects a universal tendency of humanity: the inclination to inflate our understanding, to assume that we can comprehend the "why" behind our lives and circumstances. We question, we challenge, we demand answers as though we could stand on equal footing with the Creator. Yet, as God's response to Job reveals, our perspective is limited to a blink of time, a fragment of reality, a whisper of eternity.

Who among us can fathom the workings of the cosmos? Who can trace the paths of the wind, the migration of birds, the depths of the oceans, or the intricacies of the human soul? And yet, we often act as though we could sit in judgment over these things, as though our finite

minds could encompass the infinite.

In truth, we are but specks in the grand scheme of creation—beloved specks, yes, but specks nonetheless. Our existence, our joys, and our sorrows are part of a plan so vast that it defies comprehension. To question this plan, as Job did, is natural, but to curse it is to forget our place and the One who holds it all together.

A DIVINE VULNERABILITY

What makes this story even more poignant is the glimpse it gives us into God's heart. Satan's goal in tormenting Job was not merely to break Job but to wound God. And in causing Job to curse his existence, Satan achieved a painful victory. For God, the suffering of His creation is not an abstract concept; it is personal. Every wound inflicted, every tear shed, every cry of despair echoes in the heart of the Creator. To see Job, a man of unparalleled faith, brought to such despair was a grief that demanded a response.

But God's answer was not wrath—it was revelation. By confronting Job with the reality of His divine orchestration, God both reminded Job of his place and reassured him of the care and intentionality behind it all. Job's suffering was not meaningless; it was part of a story far greater than Job could comprehend, a story written by a God who felt every ounce of Job's pain and would ultimately redeem it.

THE BLINK OF AN EXISTENCE

As we reflect on Job's story, we are reminded of our own smallness in the face of the divine. Our lives, though precious, are but a blink in the vast expanse of time. Our understanding, though valuable, is but a drop in the ocean of God's wisdom. And yet, we are loved—deeply, fiercely, and sacrificially—by the One who holds the stars in His hands.

Continued on page 12

Why Trials?

Pat Kroger



Personal confession. I had noticed a new habit. Whenever someone would ask how I was doing, instead of saying, “I can’t complain” or counting my blessings, I would end up giving a brief run-down of all the challenges I had to deal with. I wasn’t complaining, only stating facts...or so I told myself. But this particular time went too far. When someone casually asked how I was doing, I heard myself say, “I’m working like a dog.” Ouch! Even I didn’t like the sound of it.

The backstory is I had worked outside the night before until well past dark. By the time I cleaned up and did what I needed to prepare for the next day, I got to bed late. Again. And Tuesday mornings start early. But hearing myself, as a child of God, having nothing better to say was unsettling. I wasn’t talking to God about my struggles; I was talking to other people about my struggles—and that’s like talking about God behind His back. Instead of using this opportunity to lift up and magnify God in the midst of my challenging circumstances, I magnified what I didn’t like about my circumstances. Once I got home, I apologized to the Lord and talked to Him about why I had started responding this way...and how better

to answer. What can I say, even when I don’t feel like things are going smoothly?

What God revealed to me in that moment is this: “Whenever you complain about what is going on in your life, you are complaining about Me. If you have made Me the Lord of your life, then ultimately whatever happens in your life is My will. So, if you are finding fault with your life, then you are finding fault with Me.” Wow! That puts a whole new perspective on Phil 2:14: Do everything without grumbling or arguing (NIV). Of course, I repented.

Mentally, I know whatever I believe about the Father will shape the way I relate to Him, to His Son Jesus, and to the world around me—I know I cannot live higher than what I believe; I know I am to live [inherent by new birth] and walk [a deliberate choice] in the Spirit, by faith and not by sight or circumstance (Gal. 5:25; 2Cor 5:7; NKJV). But I still caught myself doing the opposite. Without realizing it, I was in essence saying I didn’t really believe God loves me as much as He says He does; that He had let me down; that He’s not interested in my struggles; that I’m on my own to wrestle through the trials of day-to-day life and to just expect that He’ll show up for “the big stuff.” Ultimately, I was not believing the Word of God and not believing in God’s love and goodness. What I said I believed was not lining up with how I behaved.

I’m pretty sure I’m not the only one who has fallen into this trap. When we let our trials override what God says, when troubles are allowed to loom large and become our focus, then God cannot be our focus. The result is self-destructive. Remember, Peter supernaturally walked on water as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus, but the moment he got distracted by the wind and the waves of the storm, he began to sink

(Matt 14:22-33). Why? Because Peter didn’t have power to overcome the nature of the water or the storm. He needed something super-natural, that is, Someone supernatural. He needed Jesus to do for him what he couldn’t. Likewise, we have no power over the storms of life and the raging waves of circumstances that seek to overwhelm us. We need Jesus, the One who has power over every storm—physically, spiritually, and even mentally.

The saying is, “Don’t tell your God how big your problems are; tell your problems how big your God is.” But how many of us get distracted when the going gets tough and have not made the knowledge of God’s everlasting love and goodness transition from our heads to our hearts?

A friend recently pointed out the difference between praise and thanks. Thanking God is a response to some goodness He has shown me. Praise is simply acknowledging who God is—His inherent love and goodness—without any thought of receiving anything from Him. Praise is what I offer to God because He deserves it. Note to self: I can always give God praise, even when I don’t feel like things are ideal.

JESUS STILL TEACHES IN PARABLES

Okay, but I still wanted to understand why life had to be so hard at times. Just then, Jesus brought my son, Patrick, to mind. Instantly, I understood His lesson, Patrick got the idea to start mountain climbing: He wanted to climb Mt St Helens, for some reason. Because it’s there, I guess. Naturally, he started by doing research. When he got serious, he headed to a local park to climb “the big hill” with a light backpack. He did this almost daily, plus his gym workouts also had this goal in mind. Periodically, he would add more supplies to the backpack until it had the full load that he would be carrying, about 38 lbs., I think.

Why did he bother with the relatively small hill in a local park when his goal was a mountain in Washington State? He was conditioning his body to adapt to the weight of the backpack, building muscle strength, expanding his lung capacity, while also building his stamina to the steep terrain: He was conditioning.

Once the big hill, with his fully loaded backpack, was no longer a challenge, he traveled to Michigan with his buddy to climb a well-known sand dune. Anyone who has walked a sandy beach knows this kind of terrain is much more difficult to walk than solid ground. Climbing this sand dune straight uphill is said to take about 2 hrs. Now factor in a 38 lb. backpack. At times, they were on their hands and knees and progress was slowed to a literal crawl—it was a lot harder than expected. Yet, it was an important part of the training and conditioning that was needed to succeed in climbing an actual mountain. As it turned out, climbing Mt. St. Helens was not as difficult as it would have been had he not been so thoroughly prepared.

Climbing a mountain required more than information; Patrick had to get real-life experience. To make a point, think of training as what you learn and conditioning as what you experience. He needed both. What if his preparation only consisted in researching facts, learning every iota of what the trail was like, what conditions to expect, what food and clothes to take, or what others had experienced? What if he never stepped foot on an actual hill or dune before he tried to climb the mountain? All that knowledge would have failed to prepare his body. He would not have endured to reach the summit.

The point is, my son didn't just show up cold at Mt. St. Helens and start climbing. He knew to reach the summit he needed proper preparation. With his eyes on the prize, he started small, training and conditioning daily, and building up to more and more difficult challenges with more and more weight, until he was ready for the mountain. Success-

fully completing Mt. St. Helens made him realize he could go even bigger: Mt. Whitney (CA), the tallest mountain in the lower forty-eight. He completed that 2-day trek in July, 2024.

Again, he didn't just show up at Mt. Whitney and start climbing. He had to train and condition for it—and be consistent. He couldn't just climb a few days, then get distracted with work or life or whatever, drop it for a week or two, then go back to climbing for a few more days. This is not training; this will not prepare anyone for climbing a challenging mountain. He had to be committed and stick with it.

THE REAL PURPOSE

God used this as a life lesson to teach me that book knowledge is not enough—even if from the greatest book ever written, the Bible. I can only learn to trust Him if I have experienced that He is trustworthy through all the uncertainties of life.

Spiritually, we are staring down the worst tribulation the world will ever witness (Dan 12:1), and Bible knowledge is not enough to prepare us. We also need real-life experience. We need both. This is what our daily trials are really about: The tribulations and struggles of life are for way more than to test our faith; they are spiritually training and conditioning us in faith (knowing He is able) and trust (knowing He will) and patience (always!) in God—to answer according to His perfect wisdom, not according to our desires or limited understanding. (Rom 5:3-5; Jas 1:2-4) We have to trust that He knows better than us, always!

Whenever we physically exert ourself, we naturally breathe harder, take in more oxygen. Exerting more spiritual and mental energy during a trial will naturally cause us to take in more of the Spirit in deeper, longer “breathes.” Once we experience God's faithfulness in the relatively smaller trials, then when more challenging trials come, a weightier adversity—a bigger mountain, if you will—we are spiritually prepared because we have been consistent in

building our relationship with Jesus, day by day, and have real-life experience. A harder, “steeper” trial should lead us to more time on our knees, and our progress may be slowed to a crawl. But it's still progress, better progress, because our heart is being strengthened and our spiritual lungs are breathing in His Spirit yet deeper still as we traverse all kinds of spiritual “terrain.” Then when a new challenge comes, we can readily acknowledge that our understanding of God's ways and infinite wisdom are limited, while at the same time holding fast to His undeniable love and goodwill for us. (1 John 4:16; John 3:16; Rom 5:8) Though our uncertainty may be in the terrain itself—knowing how God will walk us through it—it should never be uncertainty in Him, whether He can or will.

For introspection, if you're not seeing God at work in your life, the problem might just be you. Maybe you haven't allowed Him to condition you for anything more than smooth terrain; maybe every little bump in the road has tripped you up and brought you into a negative state of mind; maybe you've taken your own road because it was easier, but then you ended up somewhere you didn't plan and forgot how you got there—and ended up blaming God for the detour. Whatever your circumstance, it is never because God has failed. And because His intentions are always good for us, whatever road He takes us down, He will never allow us to go through more (obstacles) than we can endure, but will always have a way out (1Cor 10:13). It is always for a very good reason: It is building our relationship with Him and His Son Jesus into an unshakable, unbreakable bond (Rom 8:37,38).

Once we learn how to navigate trust in how Christ works and walks us through each problem, they won't be such a challenge anymore and we can better endure bigger, harder trials as we press on toward the goal of our high calling (Phil 3:14)! Plus, different types of trials and troubles are like different terrain, like sand versus solid ground. They're giving us different vantage points, seeing God from different perspectives.

Then we know we can rely on Him even in the face of unfamiliar territory.

ANOTHER PARABLE

The adage is that you never have to retake a test you pass. Recall those school days. At the beginning of the course, you were given the basic material and instructions. This was usually followed by one or more quizzes throughout the course—weightier in grade calculation than daily work, but less than the final test—to verify you’ve learned and understood the material in each section. You were never expected to learn material above your grade level: First grade students are never given Calculus. If you failed a quiz, you know your homework is to focus on learning that particular material, or else. Only at the end of the course, after all the material had been covered and the quizzes taken, was the final test administered. How well you succeeded had a lot to do with how committed you were to learning the material: Lazy students rarely passed the course. But if you were committed to learn and were properly trained, you could expect to pass. Once you passed the test, the teacher didn’t give it again. You were able to move ahead to the next level of learning. The analogy should be clear.

OUR ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

The ultimate spiritual challenge we will ever face is what we have come to refer to as the Mark of the Beast crisis (Rev 13). This is not any old hilltop challenge that we can just show up at cold and expect to reach the end. We are going to need pure trust and confidence in God, no matter what happens around us or to us. However, this kind of growth doesn’t happen in a vacuum. We can’t expect to show up at this end-time crisis without ever going through the necessary preliminary spiritual training and conditioning. A mountain climber would never in his right mind show up at Mt. Everest—the ultimate survival climb—without having accomplished the most rigorous, ongoing training and conditioning, because it’s life-or-death. Likewise, we cannot expect to show up when the Mark of the

Beast crisis comes without having first endured the proper preparation. In fact, those gatekeepers who oversee Mt. Everest would not allow anyone not properly trained and prepared to even approach the mountain, let alone attempt to climb it. God is no less a protective Gatekeeper: He will never allow us to approach or encounter this ultimate time of trouble if we have not had the proper spiritual training and conditioning and preparation. That’s why we understand God will lay many believers to rest in their graves before that time comes (Isa 57:1).

As the saying goes, when fire doesn’t fall, men resort to matches. King Saul resorted to “matches” when Samuel didn’t show up when he expected (1Sam 13:8-14). We can also be guilty of resorting to matches when God doesn’t “show up” when we expect. Are we waiting for a breakthrough in our situation? For healing? Do we see no way of escape? Have we resorted to making our own way out instead of patiently waiting for God’s divine intervention?

Make no mistake, we will never stand during this ultimate “mountain” crisis if we are not properly prepared, and there will be no “matches” to resort to. If we have failed in the practice of building trust and belief in God in all the various trials and difficulties of life; if all we have is book knowledge—even if it is from the greatest book ever written—we will fail. We must have real-life experience in building faith muscles, patience conditioning, spiritual stamina, and heart endurance with constant, deeper intakes of the Spirit of Christ.

This is the true purpose for these trials and troubles: Trials produce patience for God’s timing and interventions, and patience produces Christ-like character, and Christ-like character produces hope—the hope that we can rightly experience and manifest the love of God through the darkest, most horrific trauma the world will ever encounter (Jas 1:2-4).

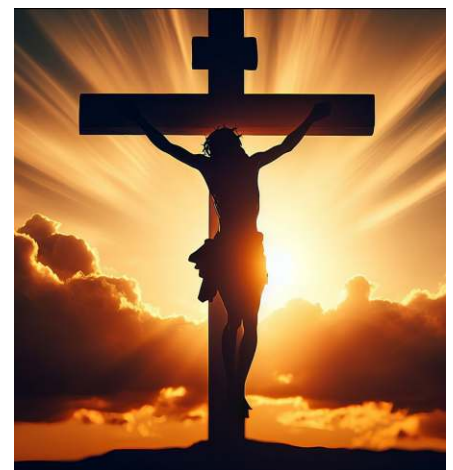
The Second Curse

Continued from page 4

In Christ, we enter into an experience of faith and fellowship that far transcends the law, a trust that anchors us in the goodness and love of God, and results in a new life, imparted by the gift of his spirit. This trust is a dynamic relationship that transforms every aspect of our lives. As we grow in our understanding of God’s character, our faith deepens, and we find ourselves reflecting His love more fully.

This is the ultimate purpose of God’s great plan of redemption, it is to restore humanity to a place of trust and union with God. The enemy’s greatest weapon is deception, the lie that God is distant, harsh, and demanding. But the truth of the gospel reveals a God who is near, a Father who longs for relationship, and a Savior who has made a way for us to return to Him.

The call of the gospel is a call to trust. It is an invitation to turn away from self-reliance, to abandon the illusion that we can achieve righteousness through our own efforts. In Christ, we find the fullness of life, a life rooted not in law but in love. And as we respond to this call, we discover the true safety of the universe—not in right behavior but in right relationship, a relationship grounded in faith and sustained by the grace of God.



Continued on page 11

An Orange A Day

Lenworth Frankson



The saying “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” is well-known, but if we think about it, an orange might deserve a similar spotlight. Bursting with nutrients, flavor, and numerous health benefits, oranges have become one of the most popular and accessible fruits worldwide. Let’s look at why an orange a day could help keep the doctor away.

1. BOOSTS IMMUNITY

Oranges are packed with Vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant that plays a crucial role in immune health. A medium-sized orange provides more than 70 mg of Vitamin C, which is the daily recommended intake for most adults. Vitamin C helps to strengthen the immune system by supporting the production and function of white blood cells, which protect the body against infections and illness. Regular consumption of Vitamin C is associated with shorter colds and less severe symptoms, making it an essential nutrient for year-round health.

2. DIGESTIVE HEALTH

One of the lesser-discussed benefits of oranges is their high fiber content. Fiber is essential for digestive health, as it helps keep the gut moving smoothly, preventing constipation and supporting regular bowel movements. The fiber in oranges, both soluble and insoluble, also helps balance blood sugar levels,

which can prevent spikes and dips in energy throughout the day. This can also aid in weight management, as fiber promotes feelings of fullness, reducing the likelihood of overeating.

3. BP AND CHOLESTEROL

Oranges are heart-friendly fruits due to their high levels of potassium and antioxidants. Potassium helps control blood pressure by balancing out the effects of sodium in the diet. Regular potassium intake can reduce the risk of hypertension, a leading cause of cardiovascular issues. Additionally, the fiber in oranges has been shown to lower LDL cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol), further supporting heart health. Combined with the antioxidant flavonoids in oranges, like hesperidin, this makes oranges a powerful fruit for reducing the risk of heart disease.

4. PROTECTS AGAINST VISION LOSS

Vitamin C and antioxidants in oranges, such as beta-carotene and zeaxanthin, help protect vision and prevent age-related eye diseases. Beta-carotene, which the body converts into Vitamin A, is crucial for maintaining good vision, especially in low-light conditions. Research suggests that Vitamin C-rich foods may help reduce the risk of cataracts and slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration, a common cause of vision loss in older adults.

5. REDUCES CHRONIC DISEASES

Oranges contain bioactive compounds, such as flavonoids and carotenoids, that have potent anti-inflammatory effects. Chronic inflammation is linked to a wide range of health conditions, from diabetes and heart disease to arthritis. The antioxidants in oranges work to neutralize free radicals and reduce inflammation in the body. This helps prevent cellular damage, lowering the risk of chronic diseases and supporting overall longevity.

6. A NATURAL GLOW

Vitamin C is not just good for internal health but is also fantastic for the skin. It helps in collagen synthesis, which keeps skin firm, elastic, and youthful. Collagen is essential for skin repair and regeneration, meaning that adequate Vitamin C intake can lead to a healthier complexion. Oranges’ antioxidant properties help combat damage caused by pollution and sun exposure, resulting in skin that appears brighter and more vibrant.

7. PREVENTS DEHYDRATION

Oranges are about 86% water, which means they can contribute to daily hydration needs. Proper hydration is essential for every bodily function, from digestion to cognitive function. Along with being hydrating, oranges contain electrolytes like potassium, which help regulate fluid balance and muscle function. For those who don’t drink enough water or engage in frequent physical activity, eating oranges is a tasty and easy way to support hydration.

8. PRE- OR POST-WORKOUT SNACK

With natural sugars and a low glycemic index, oranges provide a quick, steady source of energy. This makes them an excellent choice as a pre- or post-workout snack. They’re easy on the stomach, won’t spike blood sugar, and provide Vitamin C to support muscle recovery. The carbohydrates and Vitamin C in oranges help fuel physical activity and aid in muscle repair after exercise.

INCLUDE ORANGES IN YOUR DIET

Incorporating an orange into your daily diet is simple and versatile. Here are some ideas:

- Eat it whole: Peeling and eating an orange as-is, is a simple way to add needed fiber to your diet and is one of the easiest ways to enjoy its benefits.
- Juice it: Freshly squeezed orange

juice is delicious, but be mindful of portion sizes to avoid excess sugar.

- Add it to salads: Orange segments can add a burst of sweetness to green salads or grain bowls.
- Use the zest: Grated orange zest can be used in baking, cooking, or as a garnish for extra flavor.

THE ORANGE ADVANTAGE

While the phrase may be about apples, an orange a day might do just as well, if not better, at keeping the doctor away. Rich in essential vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants, oranges support immunity, heart health, digestion, skin, and more. So the next time you're reaching for a healthy snack, consider an orange.



Why Trials?

Continued from page 9

Eph 5:15-20: 15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity [not wasting time foolishly], because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God knows what He's doing, even when problems arise, even when we don't understand. Let's choose to believe. Let's choose to trust Him. Let's never forget He loves us without fail. Let's endure our spiritual conditioning and trials training without murmuring and complaining. And instead of lifting up our struggles, let's lift up our God always and thank Him in every situation, even when we feel like things are weighing us down. This is how we ace the final test.



God's Sovereignty

Continued from page 4

and the profound significance of free will in God's plan.

LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN CHOICE

The story of the Israelites at Mount Sinai illustrates the limitations of human choice. When God presented His covenant, the people confidently declared, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do." (Exodus 19:8). Yet, they quickly fell into idolatry, demonstrating the weakness of human decisions. The Apostle Paul echoed this struggle in Romans 7, lamenting, "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."

This tension reveals an essential truth: while humans can choose, they lack the power to carry out divine mandates apart from God's intervention. True freedom is not the absence of restraint but the ability to align one's will with God's through His grace.

AVOIDING EXTREMES

How can God's sovereignty and human free will coexist? The answer lies in understanding their respective spheres. In the Christian faith, it is essential to strike a balance between God's sovereignty and human freedom. Overemphasizing God's sovereignty leads to the belief in predestination, while overemphasizing free will can result in legalism and a works-based approach to salvation.

The Bible teaches that God is all-powerful and supreme in authority. His sovereignty means that He can accomplish His purposes without hindrance. However, this does not negate human freedom. God, in His sovereignty, has granted humans the ability to choose concerning their own souls. This limited sovereignty allows individuals to respond to God's call, but it is ultimately God who enables,

sustains, and perfects their choices. This interplay is evident in salvation. While individuals must choose to believe in Christ, it is God who initiates the relationship, provides the means of salvation, and completes the work within them. As Philippians 2:13 states,

It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)

CONCLUSION

The sovereignty of God is a foundational truth that highlights His supreme authority and power. However, it must be understood in harmony with the equally important truth of human free will. Together, these principles reveal a God who is not only powerful but also deeply loving and just. He grants His creation the dignity of choice, allowing each person to determine their eternal destiny.

For Christians, this understanding brings both humility and assurance. It calls believers to surrender their lives wholly to God, trusting in His wisdom and timing rather than striving to control outcomes. It also provides comfort, knowing that God's purposes will prevail regardless of human failure.

As the psalmist declared, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). When believers focus on their relationship with God rather than their own efforts, they find peace and purpose in His sovereignty.

May we use this gift of choice wisely, aligning our decisions with His will and trusting in His grace to guide us every step of the way.



Reflections on Job

Continued from page 6

In moments of despair, when we are tempted to curse our existence or demand answers from God, let us remember Job's lesson. We do not see the whole picture. We cannot grasp the complexity of the divine plan. But we can trust in the One who does, the One who weaves every thread of existence into a tapestry more beautiful than we can imagine.

Job's story is a humbling reminder of our place in the grand scheme of things. It calls us to lay down our inflated perceptions of ourselves, to embrace the mystery of God's design through His Son, Jesus Christ, and to find comfort in the knowledge that we are part of something infinitely greater than we can comprehend.

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Revelation and the Feast Days

Continued from page 5

PALM BRANCHES

The Feast of Tabernacles also serves as a symbol of the final gathering of God's people. In Revelation 7:9-10, we see a great multitude from all nations, standing before the throne of God, holding palm branches and crying out, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This scene reflects the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, where God's people, liberated from sin, stand before Him in purity, rejoicing in His eternal presence.

CONCLUSION

The Hebrew sanctuary and the seven feasts of Israel provide a rich theological framework that the book of Revelation draws upon to explain the cosmic battle

between good and evil and the ultimate victory of Christ. The feasts show us the unfolding of God's salvation plan — from the penalty of sin at Passover to the final dwelling with God in the Feast of Tabernacles. Through Christ, each feast finds its ultimate fulfillment, and the promises of the sanctuary are realized in the restoration of God's people to His eternal presence. In this grand narrative, we find hope, assurance, and the certainty of God's plan for our salvation, made complete through the work of the Lamb of God.

