

Faith, Hope & Love Part34

1 Corinthians 13:13

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Last week we studied the reason love is the greatest of the three building blocks; namely, love is the proof of faith and hope, for without faith you cannot live in hope and without hope you cannot live in God's divine *agape* love. They are all intricately tied, but the presence of God's love in your life is the ultimate proof that you are a man or a woman of faith—one who fears the Lord—and has fixed their hope on Jesus Christ. It is proof that you are one of the beloved. We also studied **1 John 4:7-13** that unequivocally states we should love the beloved, those like us who have the Spirit of God living within them, because God is love and love is from God. This drew us back to the *Design Point*. We must have Jesus possessing our lives in order that His love might be fully made manifest in our lives to the beloved. His love comes with His presence since it is an attribute of His personhood.

We are going to continue in **1 John 4**, but before we do I want to consider something that just might shake you up and do some crazy things to your brain. In **1 John 4:8, 16** we have the unqualified statement that "God is love." This is such a profound statement with so many implications that we will probably come back to it over and over again. **1 John 4:8, 16** are the only two times in the Bible where God is identified as love. I find that a bit strange. 66-books, 1,189 chapters, 31,102

verses, and 788,280 words, but only 3 words, repeated, identify God as love. Of course, the Bible speaks of God loving people, but even then it a rare occurrence. I found approximately 23 references in the Old Testament and 35 in the New Testament regarding God loving the righteous, Israel, Judah, David, Solomon, and His people. Hardly overwhelming. And get this, the first reference of God “loving” comes in **Deuteronomy 4:37** where Moses tells the Israelites that God chose them because He loved their forefathers. Imagine, from Adam all the way though to Moses, 26 generations, estimated to be around 2,500 years, there was no direct revelation recorded of God being love, much less of Him being a God who loves.

Think about our heroes of faith mentioned in **Hebrews 11**: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. They loved, served, and obeyed God; yet, not even once do we have a reference to God communicating that He is love or that He loved them. Now, I am not saying He did not communicate His love to them, but we have no record of it. Which is why it is fascinating to consider how those heroes of faith processed all that happened to them. Sometimes it is good when you read to remember that they were just men and women like you and me with all the normal hang-ups, insecurities, and fears that plague all of humanity. And even though the Bible gives us only a high level view of their happenings, we can imagine how we would have reacted and felt; and, it is highly likely that they thought and felt the same way.

What did Adam and Eve think when God ushered them out of the garden? What did they think when He sacrificed the first animal to cover their sin and nakedness? Did they even comprehend what He did for them and what it meant? Do you think they had any inclination that this was the plan all along? What did Noah think when

God told him in **Genesis 6:13-14**, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.” Did he think he was loved? Did he think God was going to let him live? Did he think God loved the animals more than mankind? What about Abraham? Imagine what he was thinking when some unknown God told him to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s household with only a promise of blessing and a promise that he would lead him to some unknown land. Keep in mind, at that time Abraham and his family were steeped in idolatry and had no connection to the one true God. Imagine what Sarah thought when he told her that “God” talked to him and told him to pack it all up and leave everything behind.

I find it intriguing that these heroes trusted God and loved Him without possibly ever hearing that they were loved. It is a strong indictment on our faith since God has made it so clear that He loves us and still we toss and turn in wrong belief and unbelief thinking God is mean. But God is love. Thus, everything these heroes ever endured flowed from God’s very character and nature of love. It was love for God to banish Adam and Eve from the Garden. It was love for God to have created Lucifer knowing full well he would fall from grace and be the source of deception whispering in the ears of Eve. Yes, the fall of man was love. It was love when God cursed Cain and drove him away from all his people. It was love when God destroyed all the earth and its inhabitants with a flood. Millions perhaps billions died and still it was an act of love because God can only act in a way that is consistent with His nature. And it goes on and on and on. Consider this, every single vile act of evil that has occurred in the realm of humanity has occurred with the permission, approval, and even the direction of the one and only Lord God

Almighty; and all of it was and is love.

Do you remember the first name of God we studied when we were learning about faith? It was **El Shaddai**—the Lord God Almighty. We learned that He is the Alpha and the Omega the Beginning and the End (**Revelation 21:6**). Everything starts with Him, proceeds from Him, and ends or is completed with Him. For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things (**Romans 11:36**). He is the Lord; therefore, He is the one who is in control of all things all the time. Nothing escapes His rule. Even the enemy is just a tool working for Him carrying out the will of **Jehovah Sabaoth**—the Lord of Hosts. God sits outside of time and knows all things before they ever happen; thus, He can arrange, and has arranged, all things and they happen exactly as He determines; and being Almighty, no one—not even you—can thwart His will. Yet everything that proceeds from Him is love.

You might be thinking how can that be? There have been such gross, vile, and evil atrocities that have occurred all throughout history and some of them have occurred to you and your loved ones. Yet, the Bible makes it clear that all of it, every single bit has come from the hand of the Lord God Almighty who is love, who is good, who is righteous, and who is holy. None of what He has allowed, permitted, and authored extends outside of any of these attributes. Some of you might be very uncomfortable with this considering what you or your family members have gone through and what you know as occurred throughout the annals of our history. I know this is hard. Our minds have not been challenged in this way. But when it is all said and done I believe you will be able to declare that God is love; not because I say, “trust me,” but because you are convinced by the Word of God.

Now in the vein of complete disclosure, and taking this concept beyond the

esoteric argument of God's Lordship over all the affairs of humanity, I want us to consider four passages that are critical to understanding love. This is going to be difficult; but I will not back away from disclosing to you the truth as it is revealed in the Word of God. I will not avoid it, I will not obscure it, and I will not distort it. Besides, if God is love then there is absolutely nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to His Word, whether I like what it says or not, or fully comprehend it.

First, I want you to understand that in Hebrew there is a word which is commonly translated as "calamity" or "destruction" and it is "eyd," and it means oppression, misfortune, calamity, ruin, or destruction. For instance, **Job 31:23** says, "For calamity ["eyd"] from God is a terror to me, and because of His majesty [or His "Highness"] I can do nothing." This definitely picks up the sovereign nature of God's Lordship. The calamity is from God and mere humans are helpless because of His divine majesty. But in each of the four passages we are going to examine, where "calamity" is mentioned, "eyd" is not used; rather, the Spirit of God uses the word "Ra," which is literally translated as "evil." Clearly, the translators did not like the literal meaning; presumably, it did not fit within their theological construct, so they substituted a more tolerable concept. But that is not what the Hebrew communicates, it is to be literally understood as evil. It is the word used for the tree of knowledge of good and evil (**Genesis 2:9**); it describes the wickedness of man before the flood wherein all the thoughts of the heart of man were evil continually (**Genesis 6:5**); and it used to demarcate evil demons from angels (**1 Samuel 6:14-16**). This word is used 667 times in the Old Testament.

Amos 3:6: If a calamity [evil] occurs in a city has not the Lord done it? (Note, the

use of “Lord” by definition demands a positive response to this question.)

Isaiah 45:7: The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity [evil]; I am the Lord who does all these.

Isaiah 31:2: Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster [evil] and does not retract His words.

Lamentations 3:37-38: Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill [evil] go forth?

In our study on the names of God, we learned that Jesus is **Jehovah Sabaoth**—the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. This name is used 239 times in the Old Testament—more than any other compound name in the Bible. This gives us insight into the fact that God employs His angels to carry out His work in this world and that work, without exception, touches every aspect of human life. We also learned that Jesus is the one who sits atop the Mountain of God and calls to order all the hosts of heaven (both the good angels and the evil demonic angels); and it is from this Great Mountain that the Lord authorizes and approves the events of our lives. Both good and evil go forth from the mouth of the Lord. If an evil occurs in a city, has not the Lord done it? God takes personal responsibility for all that occurs and He clearly communicates this to all of mankind; still, God is love.

How then do we reconcile rape, incest, molestation, and pedophilia with love? How about abuse, hate, murder, torture, emasculation, euthanasia, abortion, war, suicide, and genocide? How do we reconcile prejudice, deceit, treachery, betrayal,

and adultery with love? And those are just a few of the evil and vile acts of man. How do we reconcile earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanos, plagues and pestilence, and other natural disasters that wipe out whole communities as love? And on and on it goes. How do we reconcile as love those who get to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and those who don't? How about the parables that are intentionally designed so that certain people will not understand them (**Matthew 13:13-17**). How is that love? What about hell, the Lake of Fire, and the Great White Throne Judgment where anyone's name who is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life is thrown into the Lake of Fire (**Revelation 20:15**). Seriously, how can I stand up here and declare that God is love? Am I taking crazy pills or something?

And keep in mind everything that has happened was Plan-A all along. In fact with God there is no Plan-B ever. He is God; and since all things start with Him (He is the beginning) and all things find their completion in Him (He is the end), we can be confident that there has always only been Plan-A. God does not react, but He operates according to His great knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. From the perspective of time, it seems like He reacts to our choices because of the way He chooses to interact with us within time. But that is just because we are limited in our sight. God sits outside of time, the end from the beginning is all laid bare before Him. Every choice every single person will ever make is already known; and, in His foreknowledge, plans have already been put into place taking into account each and every choice (**Romans 8:29**). That is how big our God is and why David, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, could say in **Psalms 139:12**, "...in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them?"

Plan-A: Are you ready? We are going to attempt to understand how God is love by setting forth a framework for understanding all He does and has done.

- 1) God decided to create man before He had created anything at all (*Ephesians 1:4; 2:10*). And His eternal purpose, which He carried out in Christ Jesus, is that man would be like Him—to share His blood, Spirit, and nature, and be holy and blameless before Him. He always intended that man would bear the image of the heavenly (*Ephesians 1:3-4, 3:11, 4:24; 1 Corinthians 13:12, 15:49; 1 John 3:2*).
- 2) Being love, however, God would not force man to be like Him. He would give men the free choice to choose to love God and be like God, or to choose to be unlike God. Either way, all it would take was the willingness to believe or the decision to not believe (*John 3:16, 6:35; Romans 4*).
- 3) God also made a decision to create evil (*Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:37-38*). However, He did not force any aspect of His creation to adopt evil, but He gave them the choice. Hence, Lucifer was not created evil; in fact, he was blameless in all his ways until unrighteousness was found in him. By the abundance of the glories and beauty God gave him, his heart was filled with pride and subsequently he was internally filled with violence and he sinned (*Ezekiel 28:12-19*).
- 4) In His foreknowledge, God knew that a) some souls would choose to accept Him, b) some souls would consider Him but still choose to reject Christ even though they may honor God, and c) some souls would never ever even consider choosing Him—these are called in *Romans 9:14-24* vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Yet, even with these “vessels of wrath fitted for

destruction.” The verb “fitted” is a parsed verb meaning it has two attributes. One parsing is rendered in the *perfect middle participle* and the other parsing is in the *perfect passive participle*. This picks up the reality that these people dig down deep in their soul and chose to absolutely unconditionally reject God, and they will never ever change that decision regardless of the opportunities which God would give them. Thus, God decided to allow those souls to come into that world with their foregone decision; and He affirms and seals that decision; in love He does not contravene but respects their choice. We see this demonstrated in the life of Pharaoh. Six times when he was confronted with miracle after miracle, Pharaoh rejected God and hardened his own heart; thus, God finally decided to agree with Pharaoh’s decision and in the seventh miracle we are told that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. In other words, both parsing’s are true.

- 5) God created Adam and Eve knowing full well that, like Lucifer, Eve would succumb to temptation and choose evil and that Adam would follow her in this choice and thereby condemn all mankind under sin (**Romans 3:9-20, 5:12; Galatians 3:22**). We are told that God has shut up all mankind in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all (**Romans 9:32**). It was part of the plan.
- 6) Sin became an impenetrable barrier that separated a holy God from man (**Romans 3:23**). Man could receive a covering for sin through the sacrifices required in the law, but could not have his sin permanently removed (**Romans 3:25**). Thus, it was impossible for man on his own to ever be like God or be in the presence of God (**John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12, 20**). Sin seemed as if it threw a wrench into God’s plan. How could man ever be like God if only

God is good (**Matthew 19:17**)?

- 7) However, by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, Jesus, the Son of God, would be crucified, killed, and raised again to life in order to redeem man from sin (showing mercy to all) allowing all who would believe to be saved from death and given eternal life and become children of God. Hence, Jesus died for the sins of the world removing the impenetrable barrier of sin separating God from man (**Luke 22:22; John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 2:23-24, 3:18; 4:27-28; 1 Peter 1:20**). In fact, Christ forgave all our transgressions, having cancelled out every accusation that ever was or could be made against us, nailing them all to the cross (**Colossians 2:13-14**). His atonement was provided for everyone—all the ungodly (**Romans 5:6**).
- 8) Make no mistake, God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; thus, Jesus became the one mediator between God and man who gave Himself as a ransom for all (**1 Timothy 2:4-5**). He paid the price for all of mankind; His blood was the currency for redemption from sin. Which is why He can say that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (**John 3:16**)—whosoever. The offer is open to all.
- 9) But His divine love demanded that men must choose of their own free will to be like God; for divine love never forces its own way (**1 Corinthians 13:5**).
- 10) Knowing the beginning from the end, God knew that most men would not be saved, for most men would not choose to believe. But in love, He predestined, those whom He foreknew would choose Him, to adoption as Sons of God through Jesus Christ according to the kind intention of His will; and he prepared us for glory (**Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:29-30; 9:22**).

- 11) Having been redeemed from sin and completely forgiven, He made it possible for God to abide—or literally live—in man and for man to abide in God (***John 15:4-10; Galatians 2:20***). He did this by placing within every person who has chosen to believe in Him a new nature that is created in His image, righteous, holy, and true. And in this new nature (the *New Creation*) the Holy Spirit of God takes us His residence and permanently dwells within man. Yes, God Himself, in the person of the Holy Spirit, lives in man. (***2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19***).
- 12) The living hope of all those who have the *New Creation* is that they will one day be like God; literally completely transformed into His image. The transformation starts in our now and will be completed at the time of the rapture (***Psalms 33:18-22; Romans 12:1-2; 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49-57***).
- 13) This transformation comes by way of faith—by believing in the name of God; thus, God disciplines His people to teach them how and why they can trust in Him and why it is stupid to trust in man (especially self). The main tool He uses for this discipline is evil—the evil that resides in our soul, in the souls of all those whom He knows will never choose Him, and in the evil in the spirits that oppose us (***Hebrews 11:6; 12:4-12; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 3:19; Ephesians 6:12***). This is why evil was created; it was necessary.
- 14) But what most believers do not understand is how wicked their sin actually is and how desperate they are for the new life which Jesus has granted them. Most people believe they are really not all that bad. In fact, they love their view of their own goodness. But only God is good; only God is innately holy and we are not. Thus, to transform us into His image, He works to remove all un-holiness from our souls so He can possess our physical body. Understand,

our un-holiness is not unlike the wickedness of Satan; it is absolutely capable of every vile thing any man or woman has ever committed. Wickedness is in our heart, for our heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. No man can understand the depth of this wickedness (**Jeremiah 17:9**). In fact, it is so bad that our best of the best of human goodness is as dirty and gross as a bloody period rag (**Isaiah 64:6**). And for every sin that we have ever committed, the penalty is death (**Romans 6:23**). Imagine, if every time you sinned, God had someone killed to pay the price. Oops, there goes Ian, and Mo, and Juli, and Debbie: their dead, all dead. This price was imaged for us in the Levitical sacrifices. The death of the little lambs, goats, birds, and cows was intended to pierce the heart of man with the knowledge both of the true wickedness in his soul and his desperate need for new life. Death is the cost of your sin. Fortunately, Jesus paid this price, but death is the result of the gravity and weight of your sin; don't take it lightly.

15) And since this wickedness and darkness is so thick and ingrained in our souls, the Lord **has to** literally cut us away from this world (circumcise us) and go to war against our *flesh* (the evil that lives in us). This is the living hope of every true child of God. In His lovingkindness, He will make us like Him. He takes us through the fire and subjects us to the knife in order to do away with the evil in our souls thereby making room for Him to possess more and more of our body. This is our hope. His life in ours; a complete exchange.

16) As I said before, He transforms us through the process of discipline—what we call punishment and judgment. This comes in the form of persecution, tribulation, and suffering at the hands of the evil that resides in our heart, the hearts of mankind, and the demons who fight against us. Understand that the

idea of “punishment” however is a poor word choice because it implies, at least in most of our minds, a reaction to our being bad. But the reality is that we are bad, by nature and by choice. Therefore, to make us like Him, He has to punish, afflict, correct, discipline, kill, and destroy our *flesh* and purge away our sin (***Isaiah 27:9***)—not as a reaction to our being bad, but as a **NECESSITY** so we might have His life and enjoy His life in ours. It is an act of love. That is why David says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your Word; It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes; I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me” (***Psalms 119:67, 71, 75***). ***Isaiah 38:16*** says, “Lord, Your discipline is good, for it leads to life and health.” And ***Hebrews 12:10*** says “He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His holiness.” Again, His eternal purpose is that we might be like Him. Thus, judgment is necessary.

17) Accordingly, I believe that every single act of violence, hurt, and tragedy done to someone is an act of love. ***Lamentations 3:33*** says that God does not afflict willingly (or from His heart); in other words, it is necessary—a wounding that He has to give. We see this in ***Jeremiah 42:10*** where He told Jeremiah that He was sorry for all the punishment He had to bring upon him; but it was the only way to preserve the remnant of Judah. ***Lamentations 3:22*** confirms His lovingkindnesses never cease ever, for His compassions never fail; and in this we can rest. God does not afflict out of cruelty, but out of love.

- a. To believers: once again, such acts are done to us in order to cut us away from this world and to induce us to reject our *flesh* and instead trust only in Jesus. And because of the depth of our sin, sometimes He has to cut very, very deep and turn the temperature up on the fire

creating a heat so high that few can bear. But He knows exactly what is needed to *free* each and every true child of God from the sin that entangles them; and, if they are willing, He will go to whatever extent is necessary to effect their transformation (**1 Peter 1:6-7**). The Lord's motivation however is love and His actions are love because if you let the knife and the fire have its work, you will be transformed into His image; and, like a true child of God, you will love as He is love (**1 John 4:7-8**). And since He chose you from before time and predestined the affairs of your life (**Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:29**), He has been active in your transformation since the day you were born. This explains all the awful things that He allowed, permitted, and directed. Such things were intended to wake you up from the dead and lead you to the truth that you need a Savior and that Savior is Jesus Christ. Without those wounds, you would never come to this saving knowledge and you would not know eternal life. Therefore, His wounds—no matter how deep and horrible—are love, every last one of them. Moreover, when you let His wounds do their work, He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. He wounds and His hands also heal (**Psalms 147:3; Job 5:18; Jeremiah 30:17**). And He would never ask you to walk down a path that He did not walk before you; hence, He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and *live* to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (**1 Peter 2:24-25**).

- b. To unbelievers whose souls are not dead to Him: He allows, prescribes, and direct such acts to bring judgment into their lives to induce them to choose to believe; to get them so in touch with the truth that they

are not God, they cannot control anything, and that they need help from someone bigger and greater than they are. He even uses these unbelievers to conduct vile acts against His own children in order to pierce their conscience so they would consider God and understand that only God is good and they are not. And if anyone so much as asks God for help, He will ensure they get relief. Jesus says in **Luke 11:9-11**, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.” Likewise, **Lamentations 3:25** says that the Lord is good to those who seek Him. These acts may be horrific and vile, but if a person let’s these horrific things work their purpose in their life, they will have a chance of knowing God and knowing His redemption.

- c. Even in death, God is acting out of His nature of love; and I believe this applies even to those unbelievers whose souls are dead to Him, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. When God brings the judgment of death to an unbeliever (through whatever means), He is mercifully limiting the extent of eternal judgment they would otherwise be exposed to if they were allowed to continue in their course of sin. **Revelation 20:11-15** clearly says that all men will be judged according to their deeds and the implication is that their eternal demise will be experienced according to the gravity of their sin (**Matthew 10:15; 11:22-24; Mark 9:41**). So in His love and mercy, He often brings judgment and ends their life before they make their eternity even worse. The Lord has no pleasure in anyone who dies, not even the

wicked. He only wants them to turn from their sin and live (**Ezekiel 18:23, 32**). For believers, death is actually a blessing. Godly people pass before their time because God is protecting them from the evil to come and they rest in peace when they die (**Isaiah 57:1-2**). Besides, we know that when a believer dies, they are instantly in the presence of the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:6-8**). What could be better?

18) This idea that God shows love and mercy always is even present in that very strange passage where Jesus explains why He speaks in parables. In **Matthew 13:11-13** he says, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand." This may seem like He is being mean and cruel, but actually it is mercy and love. At this time these people do not have ears to understand, so God is protecting them. If they did understand His Word and still rejected Him, they would be heaping judgment upon themselves just like the Pharisees. This is why Jesus told the Pharisees in **John 9:41**, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." In other words, they claimed to be learned and to know God; therefore, they were held fully accountable for their decision to not believe the truth about Jesus. But the others, God gave them time to hear, learn, see, and understand. Again, He spoke words of mercy and love.

19) You might wonder about those who have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Well, God also ensured that in love His law was written on the hearts

of all men, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or defending them (**Romans 2:12-16**). Thus, every man innately knows they are not animals that operate out of instinct; rather, they have a moral consciousness and can choose right from wrong. Even since the creation of the world, in love God has made Himself known to all men through His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature. All having been clearly seen and understood through what has been made, instead of worshiping God people choose to worship the creation and exchanged the truth for a lie; therefore, we are told that all mankind is without excuse. In their arrogance and defiance, they chose to no longer even acknowledge God much less thank Him for the rain that grows their food; yet, that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them. Hence the wrath of God is presently—even now—revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (**Romans 1:20-32**).

20) And what about eternal judgment. In love, God has to live by His words of truth. He gives each man and each woman the opportunity to know Him, to acknowledge Him, and to choose Him. But still they reject Him and chose death. Thus, in love He must respect their choice. Remember, love never forces its own way. He has fully explained the consequences of that choice and the alternative benefits of choosing life. But people love their darkness and flee from His light for their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed (**John 3:19-20**). Again, love does not force anyone but will respect the choices of everyone. I truly believe this is why when it is all said and done everyone will acknowledge that God's judgment is just and true. That is why

the Scriptures say: "As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God.' Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God (**Romans 14:11-12** quoting **Isaiah 45:23**).

God is love. Everything He does, everything He allows, and everything He permits, as the Lord of all, is an act and expression of His great divine love. I am sure there are many more paths we can go down to discuss this topic and I am sure we will discover them, but for now, I think He wants us to rest in this truth. However, I believe rest is only possible from the perspective of a citizen of heaven who is waiting for God to transform their body into conformity with the body of His glory (**Philippians 3:20-21**). Otherwise, we might get stuck in the emotion and pain that is associated with judgment and the evil that penetrates our lives. It hurts to think that those who reject Him are tools of evil. It hurts to think of how often I have been used as a tool of evil to help someone else grow; it sickens me. It hurts to think of the eternal demise of others. You just want them to relent and experience what you have. It is all very hard, but God wants you to adopt the perspective of His divine love and view this world and all that happens here through that lens. Thus He says, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (**Colossians 3:2-4**). Accordingly, He wants us to live in the here-and-now like a citizen of heaven. This means we live by faith, according to the evidence and proof He has abundantly provided that He is love.

Let's Pray.