

I received the following email this week:

In researching for this week's SS lesson, Hosea and Gomer, I came across the "Come and Reason Class." In the audio, you stated that nowhere in EGW writings does she say that Jesus pleads "with the Father." I did a little research and found several places where she did. I do understand the point you are trying to make about God's character and I believe in a God who is a loving and merciful Father.

Below are some of the EGW quotes I found. I didn't research extensively, because I do agree with the point you are making, just concerned about the way you made it.

EGW Quotes:

Early Writings – End of the 2300 Days – "Those who were bowed before the throne would offer up their prayers and look to Jesus; then He would look to His Father, and appear to be pleading with Him."

Early Writings – Supplement 1882 – He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; that He had been pleading with His Father, and had obtained permission to give His own life as a ransom for the race, to bear their sins, and take the sentence of death upon Himself

Early Writings – Spiritual Gifts, Volume One – "He told them He had been pleading with his Father, and had offered to give His life a ransom,"

Lift Him Up – Chap 1 pg 23 – "He told them that He had been pleading with His Father, and had offered to give His life a ransom . . ."

Selected Messages Book 3 – "Jesus is in the heavenly courts pleading with the Father in our behalf."

My response:

Thank you for your email and for such careful listening and reading. I am so glad there are people like you who don't just take everything said but check things out thoroughly. I guess what I should have said is that nowhere does EGW "mean" the Son is pleading with the Father rather than "say" He is pleading with the Father.

But let's look at the citation you sent to see if they actually contradict the point I was making in class. The first instance cited merely says that He "appeared" to be pleading not He was pleading.

The next three citations are actually describing the same event in three different places and the context is not Jesus in heaven pleading to the Father regarding forgiving our sins, but is a dialogue between the Father and the Son regarding who was going to come and save the race and put an end to sin. You have to choose how you hear this description. Do you hear it as “please Dad, I know you don’t want to save those dirty sinners, but I love them please let me go and save them.” Or do you hear it as “No, Dad you can’t go, please let me go instead.” In other words to you understand in this conversation that both the Father and the Son were in agreement to save the race, the question was who was going to go and EGW was describing the dialogue between the Father and Son demonstrating it was not an easy thing for God to let His Son go – some misinterpret and think that means God didn’t want to save the race, not so, it was that the Father wanted to come Himself. If you have a child would you rather sacrifice your child or yourself. So these three quotes do not negate what I said.

Finally the last quote EGW is speaking in symbolic language, which we know is not to be taken literally how do we know? First, because her writings cannot contradict Scripture and Jesus said in John 16:26 that He would “not” pray the Father for us because the Father Himself loves us. There is no need for the Son to actually pray the Father for us. And secondly because EGW would not contradict herself, she said elsewhere:

“God does not love us because Christ died for us, but it was because He loved us that He gave Christ as a ransom for our sins. Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil." ST Jan 13, 1909

Notice the point – Satan alleged God was selfish, if Christ had to actually plead to the Father in order to get the Father to love us, forgive us, pardon us etc etc. then Satan would be right. But she says here that God provided this sacrifice because He loved us and no need for Christ to plead for it.

So the point I was trying to make is that Jesus does not plead to the Father in our behalf to get the Father to forgive, or be loving or to have our sins pardoned etc. Therefore, I don’t believe the EGW quotes you shared have contradicted the point I was making.

Thanks again for the reminder to be careful in how I express myself and the opportunity to clarify.

Blessings,
Tim

The Refiner's Fire Lesson 1 4Q 2007

The Shepherd's Crucible

In the introduction to this quarter someone read the fourth paragraph which begins, "Thus, our Creator, the One..."

Thoughts? What does this mean? How did He bear our griefs and carry our sorrows? It says, "all of them" does that mean all of our individual griefs and sorrows were laid upon Christ?

If He actually experienced these for us then why do we have to experience them? Isn't that like double jeopardy – double suffering? Did He experience the sorrows and griefs for the wicked and the righteous or just the righteous?

Or does it mean something else? This is the NIV rendering:

ISA 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.

Might it mean He took upon Himself our sickly state? That He took upon Himself the weight of suffering and grief that comes from sinfulness? That He took our condition upon Himself?

Is it true we only experience our own griefs and sorrows? Or do we experience the griefs and sorrows of others? Has your heart ever been grieved and filled with sorrow because of another's suffering? If we do would it be similar to the way Christ bore ours?

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Col 3:13

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." Romans 15:1-3

How do you understand it? Here is how one of the founders of our church put it:

The angels of heaven witnessed every movement made against their loved Commander. They longed to deliver Christ. Under God the angels are all-powerful. On one occasion, in obedience to the command of Christ, they slew of the Assyrian army in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. How easily could the angels, beholding the shameful scene of the trial of Christ, have testified their indignation by consuming the adversaries of God! But they were not commanded to do this. He who could have doomed His enemies to death **bore** with their cruelty. His love for His Father, and His pledge, made from the foundation of the world, to become the Sin Bearer, led Him to **endure** uncomplainingly the coarse treatment of those He came to save. **It was a part of His mission to bear, in His humanity, all the taunts and abuse that men could heap upon Him.** The only hope of humanity was in this submission of Christ to all that He could endure from the hands and hearts of men. {DA 700.5}

Thoughts? So how was Christ our Sin Bearer? He took our sick and sinful condition (subject to like passions as we are, tempted in every way like we are yet without sin) and bore it to the Cross curing in His own being this species – this human race, this creation. He rewrote in His own personhood the law of love back into this species and purged the infection which brings death. But He also bore with the sinfulness of humankind in our treatment of Him.

SABBATH

Let's recite the 23rd Psalm together –

Thoughts about the Psalm – does our understanding of the meaning depend on the context in which we read the Psalm? Is this Psalm best understood in the context of 1000 BC when David wrote it? Or is there another context? If we read it with the context of 1000 BC what conclusions might we draw?

- The Lord is our shepherd – what does that make us? What does a shepherd do?
- Do we need to worry about food or does the shepherd lead into green pastures?
- The valley of the shadow of death – how would we understand that in the context of 1000 BC?
- Anointing head with oil?
- Cup running over?
- Dwelling in the house of the Lord?

What about the context of the Great Controversy over the character and government of God?

- Walking through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil... any differences – is it primarily about our physical safety or is it about dying to self? Read first two paragraphs in Sabbath's Lesson
- Preparing a table before mine enemies – thoughts in this GC context? (see notes on Wednesday)
- Restoring my soul? He restores us back to His original ideal, in character and mind now and body at the second coming. Thus here and now as we are healed to be like him in character we take our place as the repositories of His character of love – revealing His name to the world and onlooking universe.
- Anointing head with oil?
- Cup running over?
- Dwelling in the house of the Lord forever?

Which way of seeing the Psalm, which context is most helpful in answering questions like, how a Jew going to the gas chamber might claim this psalm or how a Christian going to the stake might claim this psalm?

The TQ states the shortest way between two points is a straight line and then asks if the path described in Psalms 23 sounds like a straight line? Why not?

Could it be because we are bent, twisted, broken and we are the ones being straightened and in this process we need to go through the valley of the shadow of death? And notice, it is the valley of the “shadow” of death, not the valley of death, does that make a difference? Could that mean it is the appearance of death but in actuality is the path of life. In other words the path in which we must die to self so it feels like death but results in eternal life? Would this be why the Great Shepherd would lead us into such a valley? If this is the purpose then do we need to fear such a valley?

Would such a valley be the paths of righteousness that the Psalmist is describing?

SUNDAY

Jesus as a shepherd – what do you think of metaphor? What lessons can we learn from this metaphor?

- How does a shepherd lead? By driving or calling and leading?
- Will a shepherd put himself in harms way to protect the sheep?
- Will a shepherd stay in the harsh weather with the sheep?
- Will a shepherd seek the lost sheep?
- Will a shepherd carry a hurt sheep?

Does the shepherd metaphor always work well in today's society?

Can you think of other metaphors that might work well?

God is for Real, Man

—*God is for Real, Man*, by Carl F. Burke, Chaplain of Erie County Jail, Buffalo, New York; Association Press, New York; ©1966 by National Board of Young Men's Christian Association.

How This Book Came to Be

"Mister, what's God like?" That's the question that started this book. It was asked several years ago on a trail leading to the campfire circle at Camp Vick, the Western New York Baptist Camp. The answer to the seemingly simple question came without the slightest hesitation, and with the authority of a theological education, plus several years' experience as a pastor, and above all with the confidence that was expected of an "adult leader." "God," was the answer, "is like a father."

The reply from the boy came slowly and devastated the adult leader, his experience, his theological education, and the confidence that is expected of an "adult leader." "Hah," the boy said with much venom, "if he's like my father I sure would hate him." The rest of the trip to the fire circle was made in silence. The "adult leader" was never the same again."

Try this one. An eight-year-old girl, abandoned on the streets of a large city, asks, "If God loves me like you say he does, why did he let Mommy and Daddy go away on me?" If you try to answer this remember that you are speaking to an eight-year-old who has never experienced parental love—a

girl who has known little of family relationships except that she is not really a child—she is an intrusion.

Or what about a boy whose parents are "winos" or "junkies," or a combination of both? He asks about honoring your father and mother. There is of course, a Christian answer to this. The problem is, how do you verbalize it? How do you talk of the love of a father to a boy whose concept of a father is that of a "drunken bum" who often wakes lying in his own vomit and who fails to provide for his children? How does one honor him? Or when the same thing applies to a mother and some of "her men," where do honor and respect come in? Honor, respect, love: for many of the children who have shared in the writing of this book, these are merely words that have no meaning in demonstrable concepts.

[The author, in his ministry to inner city children, chose to tell stories from the Bible, then invited them to re-write the accounts in their own language and setting.]

The version of the Twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is Like My Probation Officer..." was done by one boy and myself. The young lad was the victim of what psychologists call a "rejection syndrome." He was quite convinced that no one in the world had the slightest interest in him, and he expressed a longing for someone to whom he could turn. We were seeking for something that would have meaning to him. About the only one he could think of who had shown interest in him was the Probation Officer, for whom he had great admiration. Thus by our working together, this boy was able to express his feeling and establish a relationship with a person, which he could then translate into a relationship with our Lord.

The Lord is Like My Probation Officer... Psalm 23

The Lord is like my Probation Officer,
He will help me,
He tries to help me make it every day.
He makes me play it cool
And feel good inside of me.
He shows me the right path
So I'll have a good record,
And he'll have one too.
Because I trust him,
And that ain't easy,
I don't worry too much about
What's going to happen.
Just knowing he cares about
Me helps me.
He makes sure I have my food
And that Mom fixes it.
He helps her stay sober
And that makes me feel good
All over.
He's a good man, I think,
And he is kind;

And these things will stay

With me.

And when I'm kind and good

Then I know the Lord

Is with me like the Probation Officer.

–*God is for Real, Man*, by Carl F. Burke, Chaplain of Erie County Jail, Buffalo, New York; Association Press, New York; ©1966 by National Board of Young Men's Christian Association.

Thoughts? Can you think of any metaphors that are meaningful to you?

MONDAY

Read last paragraph – thoughts? Anyone want to share how God's leading has prepared them for His service?

Many years ago I had graduated from Southern with an AD in nursing and was working at a local hospital. After about 8 months I was terminated – no real reason. I had never been fired from a job in my life, this hurt my ego, I was angry. I didn't understand why this happened. But I do what we all do, I got another job at another hospital. Very shortly thereafter I met a person who became a good friend. She was taking premed classes at UTC and suggested that I should go premed and we could take classes together – and that is what I did. I had always wanted to be a doctor, but the Lord knew I needed this extra little encouragement to get me to go down that path. If I hadn't been fired from that job, I wouldn't have met this friend and may never have gone on to med school or become a psychiatrist. I look back on that event with a new perspective and it has helped me handled new trials when they come along.

TUESDAY

TQ page 11 states: “The introduction to this quarter’s lessons mentions the word theodicy, a combination of the Greek words for God and justice. Theodicy is a philosophical discipline that searches for an answer to the problem of evil. Its fundamental question is “If God is good, why is there evil?” In other words, why do bad things happen to good people?

“Most non-Christian religions have no problem with theodicy because their gods just are reflections of the human beings who serve them. No one expects these gods to do much good. These religions tend to focus on appeasing the gods, with the hope of keeping their bad tempers and violent natures in check.”

Thoughts about this? Has any of this pagan thinking entered into Christian circles? How? What can we do about it?

WEDNESDAY

Top paragraph read – thoughts?

Read psalms 23:5 at the top of the page – how does this apply to dealing with enemies?

What do the three items, table, oil, cup running over have to do with dealing with enemies?

What table might this be? Could it be the table of God’s grace filled with spiritual truth and nourishment?

JN 6:35

John 6:35 – 51 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe...

At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Then Jesus goes on to say unless you eat His flesh and drink His blood you have no part with him – what does this mean? And could this apply to the 23rd Psalm?

So the table is the table of truth presented by Christ, His life, character, methods, principles that we ingest into our minds and are restored to trust –

What about the anointing of the head with oil? The oil represents the Holy Spirit which of course helped us understand the truth presented by Christ and then once we are won to trust are filled with the Spirit who heals, regenerates, transforms and rebuilds Christlike character within –

And the cup that runs over?

To the woman at the well Christ said, "Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13,14

Could this be the overflow of the cup David is referring to in the 23rd Psalms? The overflow of God's love to others?

How can we experience this when dealing with people who are our enemies?

Does it help to remember the nature and character of sin? What does sin do to the sinner? It damages and destroys the sinner. We don't have to be mad or angry at the sinner, they are destroying themselves and the more clearly we see God and His character in contrast to sin we will have more and more pity and compassion on those who are our enemies.

THURSDAY

Read middle paragraph – "Some translations..." and the dark section immediately following – thoughts? Do you like the idea of God's love pursuing you? Does this tell us something about the nature and character of God?

Bottom pink – read – thoughts? Can anyone share some "evidence" revealing God's goodness?

FRIDAY

Question 1 – thoughts – what reasons might you share for why bad things happen to good people?

1. discipline?
2. we are at war and an enemy is attacking
3. a consequence of our own conduct
4. a consequence of freedom and someone else's choices
5. a witness to the universe i.e. book of Job
6. Love requires freedom and if God were to control every being's decisions love could not exist.