



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 1 God Loves Freely

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The lesson focuses on Jesus' conversation with Peter on the beach after the resurrection where Jesus asks Peter 3 times if Peter loves Him, and three times tells Peter to feed His sheep and follow Him.

Read the last two paragraphs,

- However different our circumstances may be from Peter's, in many ways the principles is the same. That is, the question that Jesus had asked Peter is really the ultimate question that God poses to each of us in our time and place: *Do you love Me?*
Everything depends on our answer to that question. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 4).

Does this sound right to you, or is something off? Is something not quite right?

Did Adam and Eve in Eden, prior to their fall, love Jesus?

Did the 1/3 of the angels that rebelled with Lucifer love Jesus?

Was the love that Adam and Eve have for Jesus before their fall an impure love a corrupted love, a love that loved Jesus only for what Jesus could do for them? Or was their love prior to their fall a pure love—even more pure than our love for Jesus today?

Then if the only question that everything depends on is do we love Jesus, how was it that Adam and Eve could fall into sin if they loved Jesus with a pure love?

Because, while the restoration of love is required, essential for salvation—there is another divine attribute that is also required in addition to love and everything depends on it also—and it was this that was breached and it caused the breakdown of love.

- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV84).

Jesus said,

- “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32 NIV84).

The Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of both truth and love—the power that everything depends upon is the combined power of truth and love, not love alone—why?

- Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
- Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
- Fear and selfishness cause acts of sin
- Acts of sin damage mind, body, relationships—a terminal condition

The bonds of love can and were broken by lies that were believed.

Love alone, or prioritized over truth, can lead people to betray the truth in order not to hurt the feelings of someone they love, under the falsehood that they are being loving.

Love without truth is not kind—it's cruel; Truth without love is not healing—it's destructive.

Our minds, our thinking, our beliefs, our understanding must be settled into the truth, the objective reality-based truth of who God is, how His design law functions, and what happens when one breaks God's design laws. Our minds must be so settled into the truth that we cannot be moved by lies.

But our hearts, our affections, our emotional drives to action, our spirits, the animating energy the moves us must be changed from fear and survival drives to love for God and others. This is spiritual renewal, our hearts, our affections, our spirits must be sealed, so settled into love for God that we would rather die than betray Him.

This is what the sealing of the people of God actually is, being so settled into the truth both intellectually—that is our minds being settled into the true beliefs, comprehension, reality-based understandings of God, His kingdom, methods, principles, design laws, ourselves, the sin problem, God's solution. We know reality, the truth. And also being settled spiritually—that our animating energy, drives, motives have settled upon the truth that love is life, that not only is God love, but love is imbued within us and we align, prefer, choose, and have settled our hearts affections upon love for God and others and how love functions.

Thus everything depends on the truth and love of God being reproduced in us.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the events at Sinai after God's deliverance and they chose to worship the golden calf.

Read second paragraph,

- All seemed lost. Not long after God's amazing deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel had rebelled against God and worshiped a golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw what they had done, and he threw down the tables containing the Ten Commandments and shattered them. Though the people had forfeited any right to the covenant privileges and blessings that God had freely bestowed on them, God freely chose to continue with them in covenant relationship anyway—despite their unworthiness for the covenant blessing. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 5).

Any concerns about this paragraph?

Did the people have some right to forfeit? What was the right the lesson is suggesting they forfeited?

What is assumed or implied by the statement "the people forfeited any right to the covenant privileges and blessings"?

Does this suggest some legal process?

Was the covenant made with these people? With whom was the covenant made?

Adam—who is the head of all humanity—the covenant promise of salvation was made in Eden after Adam sinned when God promised to be the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent. The covenant is the covenant of grace that is for the species human. That promise to bring the Seed, Messiah, Savior, to save humankind was repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the world learns that the promise to humanity will come through this branch of the human family.

The covenant blessing is Jesus—that is the blessing. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

One can refuse to participate, to accept, to believe, to receive the promise—but all humanity is included in the covenant promise. Not by some legal right, but by God's initiative, so we don't forfeit a right, we forfeit an opportunity, reject a remedy, refuse a cure—we still have the right to the cure even if we reject it. Like we have the right to remain silent even if we reject it and talk; or the right to breathe even if we choose to hold our breath. So while we have the right to salvation even if we reject it, we will not have the right to life if we reject it! Why? Because life exists and operates in harmony with the laws of life built into reality by the Creator.

So, this idea of forfeiting the right to the privileges and blessings seems to misconstrue the problem and the solution.

What of the idea that they were unworthy of the covenant blessing?

What does that even mean? Does it mean that there are other people who are worthy of it? Does it mean they were worthy of it before the golden calf but unworthy after it? And if they were worthy before what made them worthy and unworthy? Were they somehow righteous and deserving before the golden calf and unrighteous and unworthy after the golden calf?

These statements create a falsehood in the minds of people—they focus on human behavior and make human behavior the metric, the standard, the element of right and wrong, deserving or not deserving—it is the idea that comes from believing God’s law functions like human law and we are worthy or deserving of the rights and privileges when we behave well, follow the rules, do what we are told, but forfeit the privileges when we are disobedient and break the rules.

But when we return to design law and recognize that sin is a condition of being that we were born with and did not choose to have, that is as terminal condition that without partaking of God’s remedy causes symptoms of all kinds, then we realize that God has chosen to provide the solution, the remedy, the cure to all humanity, all descendants of Adam, and none of us deserve the cure by our works, our actions, our attitudes, our initiative, or anything we do, we have right to the cure freely because God is love and God provides it without anything from us. Our only obligation is to trust Him, surrender our hearts to Him and follow His prescription, which returns us to operating in harmony with His design laws for life.

The lesson quotes Exodus 33:19 where God says,

- “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Exodus 33:19 NKJV).

And then goes on to say,

- What, then, is God proclaiming here? Essentially, God is proclaiming that, as Creator of all, He has the right and authority to grant grace and compassion freely to even the most undeserving of people. And He is doing so in this situation, even after the golden calf rebellion, by granting mercy to His people, Israel even if they didn’t deserve it. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 5).

Is there anyone, human or angel, to whom God is not gracious and will not have compassion upon?

Will God have compassion and mercy and grace upon Satan and all the lost in the end?

Does the law model a person holds impact their understanding of this question?

If one believes God's law functions like human law, made up rules that when broken require the ruling authority to use of power to inflict just punishments. If one believes this, and one is dealing with an unrepentant, unruly, guilty criminal and sinner and one offers that sinner, criminal mercy—what is one offering? Pardon—recently the outgoing president of the USA showed his son and then others mercy, he pardoned them. What did the president's pardon do? It removed the legal punishment—the criminal can no longer be punished for their crimes. But did the president's pardon make any of the one's pardoned trustworthy?

If we believe God's law functions like human law then we believe mercy is legal pardon, somehow constructing things so that the guilty do not get the punishment they deserve. And if that is what mercy and compassion mean, then God cannot show mercy and compassion to the wicked in the end because that would mean pardoning them when they are unrepentant. So, the penal/legal models, based on the lie that God's law functions like human law, will teach that God will not pardon, but will have a legal judgment followed by the use of divine power to inflict just or proper amounts of punishments upon the wicked. God has mercy and compassion on who He wants and He doesn't choose to be merciful and compassionate to the wicked in the end, not that He wouldn't want to, but because the law restrains Him, that it would be unjust to pardon them when they are unrepentant and haven't asked for the blood of Jesus to pay their sin debt.

But fortunately, that entire construct is fantasy, it is make-believe, false, not how reality works. It is the mental construction of people who are trying their best to comprehend things, but their ideas are twisted by believing the lie that God's law functions like human law.

When we return to worshipping the Creator we realize His laws are the laws reality is built upon, the laws of life. And breaking those laws causes pain, suffering and death unless healed by our Creator. And for those who refuse healing their unremedied sin condition causes pain, suffering, torment, and torture and God loves them too much to use His power to cause them to suffer without any hope of healing. Thus, God, in the end has mercy and compassion on them and gives them what they have insisted upon, respecting their choice, setting them free to reap what they want, separation from Him and eternal non-existence which is an act of compassion and mercy.

Thus God has mercy and compassion on everyone always and the outcome difference is not because God has mercy and compassion on some and anger and wrath on others, but because some respond to God's mercy and compassion by opening their hearts in love and trust and are healed, whereas others would prefer to die than to repent. And God for them does the only thing love, mercy, and compassion can do—He let's them go.

One Bible commentary provides a very colorful description of this mercy:

- God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin.** [what do you think that declaration is?] "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [What do you hear? What is His method? Why will God not clear the guilty? What law lens do you see it through, imposed

or design?]

Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked will He destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalm 145:20; 37:38. **The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.** (The Great Controversy 541.2) [What does this mean? Do you hear retributive justice and think using power to inflict harm, pain, punishment? This would be human law, imposed law, Satan's view. So, let's keep reading and see how this author applies these words to God, what law is applied in bringing about this retributive justice, how it works exactly.]

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes **no pleasure in a slavish obedience.** He desires **that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love.** [If this is true, can God then be the source of inflicted suffering, punishment and death? If you understand how reality works, you recognize that the human imposed law understanding of retributive justice with inflicted pain and death is incompatible with this very next statement. It is impossible to get anything other than slavish obedience from inflicted punishment; inflicted punishments do force the will, and it is impossible to get love and trust by threatening to kill people who do not love and trust you. Thus, immediately this author is calling every person who is still capable of thinking for themselves, every person who is not blinded by the lies of Romanism and the imposed law system, to stop, think, and inquire—how can God apply retributive justice and at the same time not be forcing people? And that is only possible when we understand design law.] **He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence.** [What reason would God have us obey? Not fear of punishment, but appreciation of His character of love, which cannot exist if God is the source of inflicted punishment. It is Satan's view that God must punish sin because it undermines love. DA761] And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. (The Great Controversy 541.3)

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. [What are the principles of God's character? Do these principles coerce, compel, or torture?] Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [Does love seek to inflict pain and suffering to torture and punish? But notice what is describe next as love for our enemies] **God executes justice upon the wicked,** for the good of the universe, and **even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What is justice? Doing what is just or right, and what determines what is actually just or right? The law—so it comes back to how one understands God's law functions. Those who accept the Roman lie that God's law is like human law believe the lie that God's execution of justice is the infliction from God of pain and death. But, when we return to worshipping the Creator and realize His laws are design laws, such as the law of love, liberty, worship and more, we realize that God uses power to heal, to save, and when people refuse Him, then God uses power to minimize pain, minimize suffer, and to stop the torment of those who won't allow Him to heal them. Thus, God's justice is like

the parent whose child is in liver failure and refuses to be healed, the parent does not seek to prolong and protract the suffering, but allows the suffering to end. Notice what is described next.] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't God make them happy? Because they refuse to participate in His methods, they refuse to allow Him to heal them. Love cannot be forced and thus God cannot use might and power to make them happy.] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. [How do they make void His law? By replacing it with a false law—imposed law. Think how sad it will be for those legal Sabbath keepers who wouldn't enter Pilates house while they sought to kill Jesus. Law keepers, but the wrong law, how many today are in the same situation?] While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided.** [Who determines their destiny? Is it a heavenly judge making a legal ruling in a heavenly court, or the decision that of the sinner who permanently hardens their heart to the work of the Holy Spirit?] **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** [These are rhetorical questions, meaning that God will not do this, God has the power to do this, to artificially keep people alive and chain them to His side. But He won't use power in this way, why? Because it would inflict torture and pain and God is the source of healing and life. Note what comes next...] (The Great Controversy 541.4)

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. [Why are they not prepared? Is it that they don't have the right blood, don't have the right legal payment, don't have the right robe to hide behind so the Father won't see their true self? Or is it that they don't have the right heart, mind, character, within them?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** [How did it become fixed? Who fixed it there? If God "judges" their characters as fixed in sin and beyond saving, does that mean God's judgment is what makes their characters fixed in sin or is God's judgment simply the accurate diagnosis of what they have chosen to do to themselves?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? (The Great Controversy 542.1)

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,— every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; [Why not? Because God uses divine power to prevent them, to torture them, to inflict harm upon them, or is their**

condition incompatible with God's design for life?] years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but *they* have never trained the mind to love purity; *they* have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.** [Why are they unfit? Is it that they don't have the right legal payment in record books, or is it something actually incompatible with life within them? Notice why they are not fit] **Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** [This is huge, what do they experience as torture? Purity, holiness and peace! Is this God using His power to cause pain, to inflict suffering, is there something coming out from God other than goodness, mercy, love and truth? It is their condition which experiences goodness as pain, purity as torment, holiness as suffering. The torture happens because of sin in them, not as an infliction from God!] **They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. [What do the wicked actually want? Separation from God! Why do they want it? To be at peace, to stop their suffering; So, in this situation what is the just action for God to take, what is the merciful action for God to take? Is there a difference between justice and mercy? Notice the next sentences] **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** (The Great Controversy 542.2)

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. [This is design law, this is justice and mercy, and justice and mercy rightly understood is always an expression of God's character of love and does the same thing] (The Great Controversy 543.1)

Notice God has compassion and mercy on every single person, the outcome is not determined by God, it is determined by every person.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God's striking instance of His love for fallen humanity is found in the story of Hosea. God commanded the prophet Hosea, "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord." (Hosea 1:2 NKJV). Hosea and his unfaithful wife were to be a living object lesson of God's love for His people, even despite Israel's unfaithfulness and spiritual harlotry. That is, it is a story of God's freely bestowed love on those who do not deserve it." (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 6).

What this reveals is what adultery truly is—it is betrayal of trust. Adultery is more than physical contact with someone not your spouse, it is when you betray the trust of your spouse, not make mistakes, but in heart betray them, give your affections, loyalty, and love to another, or turn against them and seek their harm rather than their good.

The lesson asks, after reading Hosea 14:1-4 where God promises to heal their backsliding and love them freely the following:

- “What do these verses reveal about God’s steadfast love for His people?”

Thoughts about this question?

Who are His people? Does God not have steadfast love for the Egyptians, Babylonians, Syrians, Chinese, Eskimos?

Does God have steadfast love for the entire world so much that He sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, not the Savior of only one ethnic group?

So, when we think of the chosen people—what are we thinking? God’s love is only for them—or God’s love is for all people and He is working through them to bring His healing love to all people?

Israel was chosen for mission, to be the avenue through whom Messiah would come and be the repository of the inspired record and teaching tools—but they were never chosen to be the exclusive recipients of the promises or covenant or the love, mercy, and blessings of God.

God’s love, mercy, blessings are for all people.

Read the last paragraph,

- Throughout Hosea, and throughout the narratives of Scripture, God shows amazing commitment and compassion to His people. Even though they repeatedly went after other lovers, breaking the covenant relationship, seemingly beyond repair, God of His own free will continued to bestow His love on them. The people did not deserve God’s love; they had rejected and forfeited any rightful claim to it. Yet, God continued to bestow love on them without any compulsion, moral or otherwise. Here and elsewhere, Scripture constantly displays God’s love as free and voluntary. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 6).

Is God, throughout human history, displaying amazing commitment and compassion only to the Jews or to all humanity? Again, to whom did God promise to save, to send the Messiah to deliver, to restore to righteousness? Just the Jews or all humanity that partakes of His plan? And isn’t God in showing amazing patience with the Jews showing amazing patients with humanity through whom Messiah is coming to save the world?

Adam and Eve, Seth, Noah, Enoch, Methuselah, Melchizedek, Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar and many others are not descendants of Abraham but are included in the promises as is every single human being who accepts Jesus as their Savior because the promise was given in Eden and is the promise to save humanity and that promise is accomplished through the children of Israel—and that promise is Jesus.

So we must resist having our understanding of God's love, mercy, compassion restricted to the Jews, it is for all humanity and the heavenly beings as well.

As we consider the rest of this paragraph, let's include the first paragraph of TUESDAY's lesson:

- God not only continued to bestow His love freely on Israel, despite repeated rebellions, but God also continues to bestow love freely upon us, even while we are sinners. We do not deserve God's love, and we could never earn it. Conversely, God does not need us. The God of the Bible does not need anything (Acts 17:25). God's love for you and for me and for all persons is entirely of His own volition. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

Thoughts? What do you think of the idea that we don't deserve God's love, that we could never earn it and that the Israelites had rejected and forfeited any right to it?

If we believe God's law functions like human law, imposed rules where actions cause reward or punishment, like our systems of meritocracy, then this is what one concludes. But this is not the way reality actually works in God's kingdom, a kingdom operating upon design law.

Consider, does a newborn baby *deserve* their parents love? Why? What has the baby done? The baby cries, demands attention, makes stinky messes that the parents must continually clean up.

Do babies *do* anything that merits or earns love? Then do they deserve love or do they deserve to be rejected and abandoned?

If they deserve love, from where does the worth or value come that merits they be loved? Why is it expected that babies are to be loved if they haven't done anything to earn it?

And as the child grows into the terrible twos and has willful rebellion and temper tantrums and breaks things, do they deserve love? How can they deserve love if their behavior is defiant and unruly and even threatening of the parent—"I hate you mommy. If you don't let me have candy I am going to hold my breath."

Does such a child deserve love? And what action does love take with such a child? Love disciplines, disciplines, teaches—but what might the child conclude? That they are not loved, that they don't deserve love because they have been bad and that they are being punished for their bad behaviors.

Do you think we have churches that are being led by children, by infants, by those who don't understand how reality works? Hebrews 5-6 would say yes.

Do we deserve love, not because of what we have done, not based on human meritocracy, but based on our creation—that the Creator has made us in His image and endowed us with abilities akin to that of the Creator and we are loved for who we are, not for what we do. There is nothing we can do that will

cause God to love us more and there is nothing we can do that will cause God to love us less. God is love and God always loves.

But, what we do does cause us to change to either receive and grow in God's infinite love and thereby receive and experience and grow in God's love thus more of God's love flows through us, transforms us, and thereby God functionally loves us more if we are receptive to it or we cut ourselves off from God's love and wither and die in fear, selfishness, guilt and shame. God's love never changes, we change based on our reception and participation in that love or rejection of it.

Read the second paragraph,

- God freely created this world. And, because of this, God is worthy of all glory, honor, and power. God did not need to create any world. Before the foundation of the world, God already enjoyed the love relationship that existed within the Godhead. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

What are they saying is the reason God is worthy of all glory, honor, and power?

Is it because He is Creator? Isn't that basically saying because God is powerful—omnipotent? But is that the question in the Great Controversy? Is the question over who has the power? Did Lucifer start his rebellion by alleging God isn't powerful? Is a display of might and power what is required to win the war?

In fact, what does the Bible reveal about the use of might and power? Whenever God has used it what has He gotten?

- Flood—followed by tower of Babel
- 10 plagues of Egypt—followed by golden calf
- Water from rock, daily manna—followed by longing for fleshpots of Egypt
- Fire and Mt Carmel—followed by more rebellion and idol worship

Thus the Bible teaches

- “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6 NIV84).

God cannot get what God wants by the use of might and power. The war is not over God's might and power, but by whether we can trust the One with the power. The question raised, is: if God is all powerful, are we really free? And if we are not free, then not only are we not able to love, but God is not love. Thus, the allegations of Satan were never over God's power, but God's trustworthiness, God's character. And that was called into question when Satan alleged God's laws are made up rules that require infliction of punishment by the rule-giver. In other words, undermining God as Creator whose laws are design laws built into the fabric of reality, and teaching God functions like a creature,

making up rules and hurting rule-breakers. This causes people to believe that God must use power to punish, which functionally has God saying love me or else I will have to kill you—which violates the law of liberty and causes more rebellion.

Yes, God is all powerful, God is Creator, but that is not the reason He is worthy of glory. God is worthy of all glory because despite having all power He NEVER uses that power to coerce, to force, but gives us real freedom—even the freedom to kill Him.

This is why despite the second temple being so small and inferior to Solomon's temple that when the elders who had seen Solomon's saw the plans for the new temple at the end of the 70 years they wept, but despite its smaller status it is described in Scripture as more glorious than Solomon's—why?

Some will say because God's presence was there when Jesus walked in the Temple. But if you remember when Solomon's temple was dedicated the priests could not enter because God's fiery presence came into that temple. So God's presence was at both, but the Bible says that Jesus, with His heavenly glory veiled made the second temple more glorious—because Jesus revealed the character of God in action.

But isn't the Sabbath a memorial of Creation? Yes, and what did God want emphasized, recognized, realized, promoted, believed, understood by the creation of the Sabbath? What did God do, what action did God take, what is it that makes the Sabbath holy, that God did to set it apart from all the other days that we are to remember when we remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? That God RESTED, that God CEASED using power, that in the face of Satan's rebellion and despite having all power God refused to use power to put down the rebellion, God did not force Satan into compliance, force him to bow, kneel, or admit wrong, he did not imprison Satan or torture him or execute him. God instead, after the demonstration of incredible power, creating a new world with life of all kinds, shared power with created beings—gave Adam and Eve dominion over the Earth and shared creative power where we can procreate beings in our image. And then God RESTED, demonstrating, revealing, proving that power is not what wins the war, it is truth, presented in love, while leaving people free.

Jesus demonstrated all of this, that despite having all power (John 13), that He would rather die than use that power to take the freedom of those who were acting in the most cruel and unjust ways. And after His resurrection, when the Biblical record focuses on heaven, we see over and again, “Worthy, worthy, worthy” is the Lamb who was slain. He is worthy to have all power because He has proven He is safe with all power. He will not abuse us with power. He does not use power to inflict artificial punishments for sin. He is not the source of pain, suffering, and death. He uses power to heal, to save, to hold at bay the natural consequences of what sin would do if He wasn't interceding to stop it. But in the end, when there is no one left to save because everyone is either sealed to God and cannot be moved or sealed in rebellion, having destroyed within themselves the faculties that respond to truth and love and therefore no amount of mercy, grace, love or truth will have any redeeming impact—what that happens, God stops interceding, stops holding at bay what sin does, stops using power and lets the wicked receive what they have chosen and they suffer terribly from their terminal sin condition and die eternally.

Read last paragraph,

- After the Fall in Eden, Adam and Eve had no right to continue to live and receive God's love. But God, who upholds "all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3, NKJV), in His great love, mercy, and grace sustained their lives and has made a way to reconcile humanity back to Himself in love. And that reconciliation includes us, as well. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 7).

Do you notice how the lesson continues to insert the concept of "rights" into the discussion? What does this way of phrasing things lead your mind to think? Does it suggest a legal system of right and privileges? Does it smack of human systems of law and order, of imposed law?

Why not say instead, *After the Fall in Eden, Adam and Eve had no ability to continue to live, no ability to respond, appreciate, understand, respond, or harmonize with God and His love?*"

Did Adam and Eve have a right to be created in the first place? Did they have a right to exist at all? Isn't all life a manifestation of God's love and grace?

Was the problem after Adam's sin one of rights or one of condition of being?

What is the natural attitude, drive, motive, ability of the carnal heart?

- The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8 NIV84).

What is being described? Is this a legal problem a rights problem or a state of being problem?

The natural sinful heart is in harmony with Satan and does not submit to God, our hearts must be converted, reborn, regenerated and this is an act of God's power working to first cause enmity between us and Satan to convict, draw, put a desire for love into our hearts, and then to recreate us in righteousness when we do surrender in trust.

Consider this historical quote:

- The Lord says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." The enmity does not exist as a natural fact. As soon as Adam sinned, he was in harmony with the first great apostate, and at war with God; and if God had not interfered in man's behalf, Satan and man would have formed a confederacy against heaven, and carried on united opposition against the God of hosts. There is no natural enmity between evil angels and evil men; both are evil through transgression of the law of God, and evil will always league against good. Fallen men and fallen angels enter into a desperate companionship. {ST, July 11, 1895 par. 5}

The issue for Adam and Eve and every one of us is not about rights, it is about reality, about our state of being, about being infected with a spirit of fear and selfishness and our need to die to that old motivational drive and be reborn with the spirit of love and trust.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the parables of the wedding and wedding feast.

The king is having a wedding and invites guests but they do not come so he sends out more heralds to invite everyone from everywhere.

Who is the groom and who is the bride?

When does the wedding take place and when does the wedding feast, the wedding celebration, take place?

Does the wedding take place before or at the second coming? Does the wedding feast take place before or after the second coming?

What happens at a wedding? Jesus said,

- Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:4-6 NIV84).

What happens at a wedding? Two individuals join together in the bonds of love and trust and become "one."

Jesus is the groom the church is the bride, and we, the church, the saved, to become united with Jesus, we are to enter into a union with Him!

And is there another symbolic reference to this wedding ceremony in Scripture, a ceremony in which alienated believers become united into oneness with God?

The Day of Atonement—when two become one.

This parable is about the cleansing of the sanctuary, the cleansing of the bride, the union of Christ with His people, when we become one. This is taking place right now, as we, the bride of Christ, through our love faith relationship are being purified, cleansed, and united with Jesus such that nothing will shake us out of it.

THURSDAY

Read third paragraph,

- Yet, Christ went to the cross for these people and for us. Amazing love! While human sin merits death, God Himself (in Christ) paid the price and has made a way to repair the ruptured relationship between heaven and earth. Meanwhile, He continues to bestow His love on us, though He is under no obligation beyond His own free commitment to do so. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 9).

How would you explain the purpose of the death of Christ?

To pay a penalty? To whom? What was the nature of the price? Why was a price required? Does the law one holds impact the answer?

What is the problem sin caused that the plan of salvation fixes?

Is the problem legal or lethal? Is it a problem with God or God's attitude? Did sin change God or change the sinner?

Did sin change God's law?

No, sin changed human beings and the solution must be effective in humanity in order to fix what sin has done. And thus Jesus became human to eradicate the cause of sin, the fear, selfishness that severs our connection with God, breaks His protocols for life and causes. Jesus destroys death and brings life and immortality to light.