



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 3 To Be Pleasing to God

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read the entire day's lesson,

- Imagine the following scenario: a five-year-old child comes to his father with a poorly wrapped gift on Father's Day. Excitedly, he hands the gift to his father.
Imagine that the father says, "Son, I do not care about your gift. After all, there is nothing you could give me that would please me. Anything you could give me, I could get for myself, and anything you give to me was either bought with my money or made from materials that I paid for. So, keep your gift. I do not need it or want it. But I love you, anyway."

Ouch!

What do you think of this father's reaction? Such words as heartless, cold, and unfeeling come to mind. Is this the way God responds to us? Can we actually be pleasing to God? Hard as it is to imagine, even we as fallen beings, corrupted by sin, and prone to evil—yes, we can be pleasing to God! In other words, God does not look upon us, or the gifts that we bring Him, with the attitude of that father. On the contrary, we can be pleasing to God, but only through Christ. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 20).

Why is the way of the human father depicted in this text not the response that our heavenly Father gives?

Where is the focus of the human father? What is the focus of our heavenly Father? Isn't the focus of the human father on the task, the performance, the objective value or quality of the gift itself, which is an expression of selfishness, what value does the gift have to the father; whereas our heavenly Father is not concerned with material or substance value or quality, but the character quality, heart attitude, the motive, which is an expression of love for the child?

And while it is true that both the earthly father and our heavenly Father could get any material object, possession, or substance of higher quality than the child can give, can *either* the earthly father OR our heavenly Father get love, devotion, affection, loyalty, and reliable and trustworthy character from another person by the exercise of their own abilities and power?

And what happens to the child's growth, development, and maturation if the father does all of these things for himself? So if the father loves the child, what does the father do?

Recognize what God loves is healthy people, people who are not dying of sin, people who have His living law restored within them. God loves healthy people who have hearts and minds that love and trust Him and live His methods and that cannot be obtained by God's use of power—it is not the deed that God loves, but the motive of the heart that leads to the deed and the *choices* to act on the motives of heaven which build mature character.

This is why the Bible says God loves a cheerful giver and does not say that God loves a giver. It is not primarily about the act of giving, it is first and foremost about the heart motive of love that leads to giving.

This is why the Bible teaches God does not win by might or power but by the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and love (Zech 4:6).

This is why the Bible teaches that we sinful humans look on the outward appearance, the actions, the deeds, the behaviors, but God looks on the heart, the motive that leads to the action.

This is why the Bible teaches that we are to present ourselves to God as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God. The gift God loves and desires is the same gift that every parent loves and desires—children that have hearts that love, hearts that love to grow, develop, and mature in God's methods and principles, hearts so that they are freed from the sickness of sin.

So God loves our acts of love to Him, our deeds from a heart that loves because He loves us and He knows when we live His methods it is good for us, and also because of the law of exertion, when we do healthy things from healthy motives we grow stronger in godly character.

And this is why God hates our gifts when they are given out of legal obedience, out of obligation, out of a sense of debt, out of fear and guilt, gifts given begrudgingly but believing if we don't God will be upset and withhold His blessings. For if we give gifts from such motives we actually harden our hearts against God despite behaviorally being obedient. This was the older brother in the Prodigal Son story. He stayed home and behaviorally obeyed, but did so with a heart that was resentful.

This was the Jews throughout their history and God repeatedly contrasts the two types of obedience, the obedience that comes from fear of punishment, from law keeping, and that which comes from love and trust, which Paul also contrasts as the obedience that comes from law versus faith.

Any Bible texts come to mind?

Here are a few, but this theme is repeated over and again and it is the ongoing conflict between God and Satan over hearts and minds centered on the question of law and government. The imposed law system instigated by Satan is all about behavioral conformity and focuses on the ritual, deed, and legal religious requirements whereas our Creator's system of design law is all about health, life, and happiness and focuses on the heart motive and attitude. And any deeds prescribed by God are tools, aides, devices provided for the sin-sick to assist us in recovery and healing, they are not legal requirements.

But here are some texts:

- Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! “The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:10-14 NIV84).

And four verses later God says,

- “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84).

These Jews that God describes as Sodom, did not have the wrong Sabbath day, the wrong Temple, the wrong feast days, the wrong clothing, the wrong animals for sacrifice, the wrong vessels to carry out the sacrifice, the wrong name for Yahweh, the wrong tithing system, the wrong songs—they had the wrong understanding of law. They had the wrong picture of God and God’s law. They viewed God like a dictator and his law as imposed and thus their obedience was legal performances, rule-keeping, and they did it out of obligation, with hearts that resented having to do it, and without understanding. Thus God hated their carrying out and observing the correct behaviors that He instructed them to do because their hearts were not right with Him and in acting out the right behaviors with the wrong understanding and wrong motives they actually hardened their hearts against God.

He says the same through other prophets:

- With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:6-8 NIV84).

Or from Hosea:

- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me. (Hosea 6:6 GNT).

Again, notice what God wants—He wants hearts that love, not drones that behaviorally obey rules with hearts that are either in rebellion or don’t love and simply function the role of a slave.

Consider these historical quotes, exposing this elements:

- The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of **obligation** merely-- because **he is required to do so**—[what kind of law leads to this type of response?] will never enter into the joy of obedience. **He does not obey.** When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may **know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within.** It springs from **the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.** The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God. *Christ's Object Lessons* p. 97, emphasis mine. [This sums up the difference between imposed law and design law. Imposed law is external, is behavioral modification and mechanical performance based on threat of punishment and is not actual obedience. Whereas, design law is about healing the heart so that we actually love doing what is right, it is our preference. We rebel against breaking God's law instead of rebel against keeping it.]
- A **sullen submission** to the will of the Father will **develop the character of a rebel.** By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is **not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God.** It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. *Signs of the Times* July 22, 1897, emphasis mine.

The sad history of Christianity, including where we find ourselves today, is that Christianity became infected with Roman law, imposed rules, that changed the understanding of who God is understood to be, how His law and government function, what the sin problem actually is, how God solves the sin problem through Christ and has resulted in a form of godliness without power because it focuses on law keeping or legal loophole law keeping of a substitute who kept the legal demands of the law and then teaches that we cannot.

But the truth is that through Christ we can receive a new heart and right spirit, an actual new life, an actual new animating power, desire, drive, motive, that we can choose to say yes to, that we can choose to follow and by doing so, we enter into a cooperative relationship with Jesus that transforms and heals us and then our gifts, our obedience, our actions to worship God are acceptable because God sees, no matter how imperfect the action, no matter how many notes we sing off-key that we sing, we live, we worship with hearts renewed to love Him and others!

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- As we saw in an earlier lesson, there is no one—even the worst sinner or worst evildoer—whom God does not love. And because God values people more than we could possibly

imagine, He is displeased by sin because He loves us and knows what sin does to us, as well.
Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 21.

I think this is very well said! Well done Study Guide! Now, the question—what does sin do to us?

Does it get us in legal trouble or lethal trouble?

And how did you and I become sinners? Did any of us choose to become sinners or were we born with the sin condition? Psalm 51:5.

And if we were born with the sin condition—is it our fault that we have it? If someone is to blame for the fact we are sinners, who is that someone? Adam and Eve. They were sinless, and they had the power to choose to remain sinless and reject the lies. But they believed the lies and chose to break God's law of love and trust and they changed their being, their spirit, their life energy, their animating drive to action was changed from love and trust, to fear and selfishness.

And each of us are born with this shared life, the only life that Adam and Eve had to reproduce with. Like an HIV infected man and woman having a child born HIV infected. The child did nothing wrong, the child has no guilt, yet the child still has a terminal condition, a condition of being that without remedy will cause symptoms and end in death. That is every human being since Adam and Eve sinned. And if the HIV infected child is presented with a free remedy and is able to comprehend and choose to say yes or no, and they refuse the remedy and prefer the sickness, while it is not their fault they have the condition, it is their fault for refusing the remedy. That is the difference between the saved and the lost—all humans are born in sin and conceived in iniquity and we have no guilt for this. But all who refuse the remedy will suffer the natural consequences of what that terminal sin condition does when God stops holding at bay the ultimate results, and they will be guilty of refusing the remedy that would have saved them from the condition that is not their fault for having.

Jesus came to be our substitutionary Savior. He came and voluntarily took up a condition that was not naturally His own, suffered a fate that He did not naturally deserve, in order to eradicate the spirit of fear and selfishness from humanity, which is the cause of death, and restore into humanity the spirit of love and trust. This could only be done by a human being possessing the life, the spirit, breathed into Adam in Eden, and corrupted by Adam, a being who had another spirit, a sinless, holy, spirit and by that human being always choosing to live only the life animated and motivated by the spirit of love, which Jesus did and despite the spirit of fear tempting Him to save self—consider Jesus' temptations in Gethsemane—Jesus chose to live only the life of love and at the cross destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and arose in a humanity delivered from death, purged from the infection of fear and selfishness. And Jesus becomes the source of salvation for all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

So yes, God hates sin for sin breaks His design laws for life and cut people off from God the source of life and results in terrible painful symptoms and eventual death.

The lesson focuses our attention on the parable of the Prodigal Son, who took his inheritance and went off and wasted it all, ended up starving while feeding pigs wishing he had pig's food to eat. He

eventually comes to his senses and returns home and the father sees him a long way off and runs out to meet him and restores him to full sonship, and the older brother who stayed on the estate was angry with the celebration and the restoration.

What lessons do we learn from this story?

Why do you think the son went home? What was the son's motive? Did the son go home because the son loved the father? Did the son go home because the son actually knew the father well?

Consider what the text says:

- “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.” Luke 15:17-20 NIV84.

Does this sound like he knew his father? Did he go home because of love for the father? When do you think the son actually came to know his father and experienced a true heart conversion? Wasn't it when he returned home and received the love, the forgiveness, the grace, the restoration, the acceptance without price, without legal payment, without having to work or earn it?

But how did the older brother respond? Was he happy with his father or his brother?

And this is what Paul was dealing with when writing to the Jews who were legally observing the rules, like the older brother, doing the work assigned with hearts unrenewed:

- Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:4 NIV84.

Those with hearts unrenewed, those who don't actually know God, those who believe God's law functions like human law, show contempt for the kindness of God, not realizing it is the kindness of God that leads us to repent, to trust, to surrender to Him and die to the old life of fear and selfishness and be reborn in love and trust.

Read the questions at the bottom:

- Interesting is the reaction of the other son. Why was this reaction such a human reaction, based at least in part on fairness, and so understandable, as well? What, however, does his part of the story teach us about how human concepts of fairness don't capture the depth of the gospel or of God's love for us? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 21.

What is the natural, which means carnal or sinful, human motivation to action? Survival of the fittest, the fear and selfishness motive. And what kind of law do people motivated by fear and selfishness

establish wherever they can? Imposed rules with externally inflicted punishments. And what is fairness in such a system? Getting what one deserves.

But in God's kingdom what is the right or fair thing to do? If you see a person who is dying from an overdose of heroin, what is the right or fair thing to do if you have the ability?

MONDAY

The lesson talks about rejoicing with gladness and references the biblical account of God using the metaphor of a marriage, where the people of God are the bride.

The New Testament also uses this imagery, where Christ is the Groom and the church is the bride.

How many have read our magazine [The Wedding of Christ to His Bride: Preparing the Church for the Second Coming](#)? If you haven't I recommend it. You can read it online, download the pdf online, or order paper copies to read and share with your friends through our online store.

What do you understand the metaphor of the wedding to teach?

What happens in a wedding ceremony? Isn't it the uniting of two hearts and minds into a unity of one joint sacred fellowship? The two shall become one?

Is there another Bible symbolism, object lesson, ritual, metaphor that teaches God becoming one with His people? The Day of At-one-ment!

In the Jewish economy they had seven annual feast days that recurred in a cycle, which were designed to teach them the plan of salvation from the time of Adam's sin until the earth is made new.

- **Passover:** The first feast in the annual cycle was the Passover. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God "passed over" their sins. He "left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Romans 3:25 NIV84) and promised a Passover Lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 NIV84). This feast had its fulfillment in Jesus—the Passover Lamb, who was crucified on Passover Friday. The time in human history covered by this feast was from Adam's sin until Christ's death on the cross.
- **Unleavened Bread:** This feast was concurrent with the Passover and symbolizes that after Adam's sin, God immediately began dispensing truth unmixed with error (symbolized by the unleavened bread) to nurture and feed His children. The bitter herbs represent the bitterness caused by sin, which became a part of human life. Both the Lamb slain and the bread without yeast represent Christ, the source of truth and healing for sinful humanity.

This Passover meal was eaten before the death angel came, which symbolizes that God had predetermined to "passover" our transgression and provide a remedy to save and heal us from

our terminal sin condition. Jesus is our remedy; He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized the internalization of the truth about God as provided by Christ. The time period represented in the Feast of Unleavened Bread is from Adam's fall until the crucifixion of Christ. This feast was replaced with the communion service to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ after the crucifixion and to represent the continual necessity of the partaking of Jesus to be saved.

- **The Wave Sheaf:** This was also symbolic of Christ, who is the sinless first fruit raised from the dead. Just as the wheat is buried in the ground, symbolically dying, and comes forth in newness of life, so also Christ was buried in the ground, came forth in newness of life, and brought forth many righteous with Him. The time frame represented by this ceremony was from the time of Christ's resurrection until Pentecost—the time Jesus and those resurrected with Him witnessed in person in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52, 53).
- **Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):** The truth spreads and takes root in many hearts and a harvest is experienced. This was fulfilled during Pentecost two thousand years ago, when the Holy Spirit fell upon those believers of the early church and the truth about God spread throughout the known world. The time frame covered is from ad 31 (Pentecost) until the nineteenth century.
- **Trumpets:** A special message for the end of time that is to awaken the end-time church (symbolized by the ten virgins in Christ's parable) from their slumber and announce Jesus, the Bridegroom, is coming soon. Prepare! Get Ready! Christ is coming back soon! This trumpet call is to call the people to the wedding of Christ, the Groom, with His bride, the church, and occurred with the Great Awakening in the nineteenth century.
- **Atonement:** At-one-ment is the time immediately before the second coming of Christ, when the Groom puts the final cleansing touches upon His bride, wedding her to Himself, purifying her into complete harmony of heart, mind, motive, method, and character with Him, for "we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). This is the time in which we are living today!
- **Tabernacles:** This feast symbolically taught the time after the wedding (two becoming one), when the saints tabernacle (dwell) with God away from the world of sin in the earth made new. This is the wedding supper of the Lamb.

We find ourselves today in the time of the Day of Atonement. The time where Jesus is uniting His people to Him, sealing them to Himself. Cleansing His bride, preparing His people to meet Him face to face. And when that work is complete He returns to receive His bride and we celebrate the wedding supper of the Lamb.

The wedding happens first and the celebration happens second.

And what is necessary for the church, the people of God, to be cleansed, purified, brought into unity with Jesus?

Is this something that happens in record books, or is this something that happens in hearts and minds?

If you would like a deep dive into understanding the evidence documenting that the cleansing of the sanctuary, the atonement ritual and the cleansing of the bride, the preparing of the church for the second coming are the same event, watch our video [Light from the Sanctuary](#)

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- How could it be that the God of the universe takes delight in mere humans, fleeting blobs of protoplasm on one tiny planet amid what is probably an infinite universe? How could it be possible that humans could matter so much to the Supreme Being, who is all-powerful and who needs nothing? These questions can be parsed into two aspects. First, how could God Himself be delighted? Second, how could humans bring Him delight, particularly given our sinfulness? The first aspect of these questions is the topic for today and the second for tomorrow. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 23.

I can't tell if this is simply hyperbole, exaggeration, a provocative statement designed to teach by contrast, or is there is some seriousness to this paragraph?

But, let's break it down, the first question:

- How could it be that the God of the universe takes delight in mere humans, fleeting blobs of protoplasm on one tiny planet amid what is probably an infinite universe?

Was it God's original design that we would have transitory lives, that we would be fleeting, or did God design us to live eternally? And in that design what function or role did God intend for us? To be friends of His. So, the answer to the first question is to recognize that sin has corrupted God's design, interfered with God's intentions and plans for us and we would err to answer this question merely from the position of our current terminal sin-state.

I find this seems to happen a lot, people degrading our value and worth to God because of what sin has done to us. But it is not biblical—in fact, I will say that it is demonic. It is Satan that hates humanity and wants to infect our minds with lies that we have little merit, little worth, and are not that valuable to God. But it is a lie, “For God so loved the world...”

Consider these historical quotes, do you agree?

- Jesus gave His life for the life of the world, and **He places an infinite value upon man**. He desires **that man shall appreciate himself**, and consider his future well-being. If the eye is kept single, the whole body will be full of light. If the spiritual vision is clear, unseen realities will be looked upon in their true value, and beholding the eternal world will give added enjoyment to this world. *Counsels on Stewardship* p. 136, emphasis mine.

- It was a wonderful thing for God to **create man, to make mind**. The glory of God is to be revealed in **the creation of man in God's image and in his redemption. One soul is of more value than a world**. God created man that every faculty might be the faculty of the divine mind. The Lord Jesus Christ is the author of our being, and He is also the author of our redemption, and everyone who will enter the kingdom of God will **develop a character that is the counterpart of the character of God**. None can dwell with God in the holy heaven but those who bear His likeness. Those who are to be redeemed are to be overcomers; they are to be elevated, pure, one with Christ. *E.G. White, SDA Bible Commentary* p. 1105, emphasis mine.

While we are sin-sick and possess no remedy, no ability to cure ourselves, no ability to free ourselves from sin, that does not mean we have lost value or worth. It is because we are valuable to God that He grieves over ever soul lost.

Next portion of the paragraph seems to either be presenting hyperbole to contrast reality or is struggling with understanding reality and asks,

- How could it be possible that humans could matter so much to the Supreme Being, who is all-powerful and who needs nothing?

How could a parent who needs nothing from their child possibly value that child?

Again, God values what God cannot create, what God cannot get by the use of might and power, what God cannot provide for Himself and that is love from another free being.

God is love and God loves love. And love cannot be achieved by the use of might and power. God cannot receive love from robots or puppets, but only from free beings. Further, God is a Creator and all humans are created in His image and we know from experience the joy in creating. God rejoices and experience pleasure and joy from His creation and seeing His creation thrive, develop, and grow in harmony with Him and how life is built to operate. So it goes beyond God directly receiving our returned love, it includes God rejoicing in our development, our excitement with new discovery, or growth, our happiness—just as every parent gets delight in seeing their children playing, learning, developing even when the child is not directly telling the parent that they love them.

And God cannot do any of this for Himself by the exercise of His own power to provide it back to Himself.

So the lesson is either asking this to contrast, or they don't comprehend reality because they are stuck in a Roman imposed law system of rules and power, which is suggested by the reference to God being all powerful.

But is power the attribute that God prefers and chooses to be identified by, the attribute that God chooses to glorify in? Or is it His character of love?

Read the last paragraph,

- According to Psalm 146:8, “The Lord loves the righteous” (NKJV). Second Corinthians 9:7 adds, “God loves a cheerful giver” (NKJV). Notice, first, what these texts do not say. They do not say that God loves only the righteous or that God loves only the cheerful giver. God loves everyone. Yet, for these texts to convey anything at all, they must mean that God loves the “righteous” and the “cheerful giver” in some special sense. What we have seen in Proverbs 15:8, 9 provides the clue: God loves these and others in the sense of being pleased with them. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God’s Love and Justice p. 23.*

Any questions, concerns, things you would expand on or say differently?

It seems the lesson focuses exclusively on God’s heart attitude, His compassion, mercy, loving desire for all people and then His pleasure or being pleased. But, the lesson doesn’t seem to describe functional love, connecting how reality works, which is the outworking of design law.

God functionally loves a cheerful giver, those who give cheerfully are doing so only because God’s love is working, operating, functioning, growing, developing, expanding in their hearts and minds. Thus God’s power of love, God’s presence of love, God’s ability to functionally love in them expands and grows more in those who give cheerfully. And God personally loves it when He is able to functionally love His children, He loves it when His children respond to His love and grow in His love because it is good for them.

But those who give begrudgingly, from a sense of obligation, because the rules say so, have their hearts closed to God and while God’s heart still loves them, He cannot operate in love *in* them.

Consider the metaphor of the garden hose on your home and the fire hydrant on the corner. If you open both up full blast, which gives away more water? Which in so doing is simultaneously receiving more water to it?

This is a metaphor of God’s love, the more you give the more you receive. Thus, understanding how reality functions informs us how it is that God in reality, in function, loves a cheerful giver.

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph,

- Without God’s intervention, fallen people are incapable of bringing anything valuable to God. Yet God, in His grace and mercy, has made a way, through the work of Christ. Specifically, “through Jesus Christ” we may “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (1 Pet. 2:5, NKJV). Although “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6, NKJV), by the mediating work of Christ, God will “make” believers “complete in every good work to do His

will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:21, NKJV). Those who respond to God by faith are accounted righteous in His sight through the mediation of Christ, whose righteousness alone is acceptable. And those who respond to God’s loving overtures are accounted worthy through Christ’s mediation (Luke 20:35), and He transforms them into His likeness (1 Cor. 15:51–57, 1 John 3:2). God’s redeeming work is not only for us but in us, as well. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 24.

It is true that without God intervening Adam and Eve would have died from sin in Eden and thus no human would exist and none could bring anything of value to God.

In Eden, immediately after their sin, God intervened in the hearts and minds of human beings, God said to the serpent that He would put enmity between the woman and the serpent, between humans and Satan. This enmity does not exist as a natural thing. The natural result of sin is fear and selfishness and rebellion against God. The natural result of Adam’s sin is humanity joins Satan’s team in a confederacy against heaven.

But God intervened and put a desire in our hearts for Him, for love, for goodness, a dissatisfaction with evil. And God intervened by sending His Son to become the second Adam, to take up humanity damaged by Adam and eradicate the death causing principle of fear and selfishness and restore humanity back to love and trust.

With this in mind, let’s unpack the rest of what this paragraph describes.

Why is it that without faith we cannot please God? What is faith? It is trust and why is trust necessary to please God?

Because it is only through trust in Him that we will open our hearts to surrender our fear-ridden, selfish, terminal life to Him and receive from Him a new life, a new spirit, a new animating power of love. And love is God’s living law, the law upon which life is built, and it pleases God for His children to live, to be healthy, to be saved or redeemed. It displeases God for us to suffer and die. And thus we can only please God if we surrender to Him in trust/faith and allow Him to eradicate the cause of death and restore life in us.

But what about the idea that only “Those who respond to God by faith are accounted righteous in His sight through the mediation of Christ, whose righteousness alone is acceptable”?

Does this sound right or is something off?

Does the Bible say we are accounted righteous by faith or that we become righteous by faith and then after we are actually righteous by faith, God, who is the source of truth and always speaks the truth, recognizes or accounts us as righteous because we are?

First text to consider is:

- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84, emphasis mine

This is substitutionary atonement—Jesus substituted Himself for us so that we might *become* the righteousness of God, not so that God could account or declare us righteous while we remain unrighteous. The legal accounting theories are all part of the system of lies built upon the lie that God’s law functions like human law.

The Bible teaches, as we have just explored from Genesis, that the natural human heart is enmity to God and cannot please God (Romans 8). Thus, the natural human heart must be converted, transformed, renewed, we must be reborn with a new heart and right spirit that changes from the natural heart that distrusts and rebels against God to a heart that loves and trusts God and follows where He leads.

Abraham’s natural heart was enmity to God, but Abraham had a change of heart such that he trusted God and followed where God was leading. And it was only *after* Abraham’s heart changed from distrust to trust that God recognized, accounted, or declared that Abraham was righteous—because Abraham was righteous.

What does righteous mean? To be set right, put right, or justified. And what is wrong in the sin problem that needs to be put right? It is the rebellious, selfish heart of human beings that don’t love and trust God. Our hearts and minds need to be set right.

God only accounts as righteous those who have had their hearts set right with Him because they are righteous. And the hearts of people can only be set right because of Jesus. When we are won to love and trust we open our hearts to receive the righteous life of Christ, so that as Paul wrote, “it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20).

This is why when the Father looks at us He does not see our sinful selves but the perfect righteousness of His Son, because we actually have His spirit, His life, living in us and animating our hearts, motives, desires, and drives.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Under the umbrella of God’s mercy and mediation, God takes pleasure in even the smallest positive response to His love. Through the One who alone is worthy of love and is Himself perfectly righteous, each one of us can be counted righteous and counted among God’s beloved who will live with Him in perfect love for eternity. This is the great hope of the redemption, which involves Christ’s work for us in heaven. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 25.

What problems do you see with this paragraph?

Read second paragraph,

- But, you might wonder, can this include even me? *What if I am not good enough? What if I am afraid that I do not have enough faith? Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 25.*

From where do these questions arise? What causes these questions to come to mind?

Is it the human law model of reward and punishment?

Do people typically ask these questions about going to the doctor? *What if I am not good enough for the doctor to see me? What if I am not good enough for the medicine to cure me? What if I am afraid that I do not have enough faith in the doctor to take the medicine he prescribes for me?*

When we operate upon design law, the laws of health, do people typically, usually, ask such questions?

These questions are manifestations of people who have been persuaded that the problem is a legal one and somehow related to them, either their works or the strength of their faith.

Read the bottom questions,

- If God accepts us through Christ, how much more should we accept others? What light does the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:39) and the golden rule to treat people the way you want to be treated shed on this idea? *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 25.*

Does God accept us without Jesus? Or is our acceptance with God only through Jesus? Why?

Should we accept people who reject Jesus?

What of these texts?

- Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84.
- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14 NIV84.

Is it possible we could, through love and compassion, accept into fellowship people we should set healthy boundaries with?