



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 7 The Problem of Evil

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

How would you describe evil?

I have heard a variety of explanations, one explanation states that essentially every culture of the world recognizes evil as the exploitation of others. I think we would all agree that exploiting people is evil. But does the idea, the concept, of evil include more than purposeful exploitation?

- Is evil a substance?
- Can evil be transferred from one person to the next, like a germ, like a substance?
 - Could Satan who is evil, for instance, smear some evil on Jesus and thereby make Jesus evil?
 - Can an evil person smear evil on another person and make them evil?
 - Can an evil angel smear evil on a person and make them evil?
 - If evil cannot be transferred from one person to another like a substance, then why do so many theologies teach that all the sin and evil of every person was transferred to Jesus at the cross?
- Can one person do evil to another person?
 - And when evil is done to another person can evil spread in that way how?
 - When evil is done to an innocent the innocent will experience temptation. They will experience increased fear and a desire to protect self, selfishness. They will be tempted to hate, resent, believe lies, retaliate, choose to use evil methods to hurt their assailant. And if they choose to embrace the methods of the evildoer in dealing with the evildoer, what happens to them?
 - So how does evil spread?
 - And what are the weapons God has given us to stop the spread of evil?
 - Truth stops the spread of lies
 - Love stops the spread of fear and selfishness, this is why Jesus said to love our enemies and pray for them who abuse us.
 - Forgiveness stops the spread of resentment, hatred, jealousy, envy
 - But does forgiveness make the evil untrustworthy abuser trustworthy? No, it only stops the spread of the evil in the hearts of the victims. We forgive and we also don't trust the untrustworthy
- If evil is not a substance what is it?
 - Is it an attitude, method, desire, motive?
 - Is it anything that is out of harmony with God, God's design laws, methods, principles, and will?

- Is it rebelliousness, selfishness, fear?
- The Tree in the Garden was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and *Evil*—what does it mean to know evil?
 - Does knowing evil mean cognitive knowledge?
 - If you cognitively know that Eve was Adam’s wife, is that the same as knowing her as wife?
 - Is *knowing* evil the same as knowing what it is?
 - Knowing evil is knowing it in heart, in practice, in attitude, in motivation, drive, in spirit—it is having an evil spirit, or evil animating energy. So one is no longer animated by love, truth, trust, goodness, kindness, gentleness, mercy, grace, but is animated, motivated, moved to action by fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, anger, malice, rage, lies etc.
- Can evil be passed down from one generation to another?
 - What is meant by sins passing down 3-4 generations?
 - Can people pass down their life, their spiritual energy?
 - And if they are animated by hatred, jealousy, discord, bitterness, resentment, racism, sexism, can they pass along to their children these evil traits?
- Can evil effect animals and plants and the environment?
 - Paul wrote that all nature groans under the weight of sin
 - Can animals be subjected to evil treatment?
- Are evil and acts of sin the same?
 - Can someone have evil in their heart and mind without committing an act of sin?
 - Can a person lust without committing the act of adultery?
 - What is the true problem of sin, the act, or the evil in the heart that leads to the act?

What is the cause of evil?

Consider these verses:

- The Israelites did **evil** in the eyes of the LORD; **they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs**. Judges 3:7 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Judah did **evil in the eyes of the LORD**. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. **They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles** on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. 1 Kings 14:22–24 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What made this evil? Was it the behavioral perversity that made it evil, or was the behavioral perversity the fruit of the evil? Then what was the evil? It was replacing love and worship of our Creator God with that of false gods—and why is this evil?

Let's look at some more texts to see if it becomes clear why this is evil.

- They **worshiped other gods** and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city **they built themselves high places in all their towns**. They **set up sacred stones and Asherah poles** on every high hill and under every spreading tree. **At every high place they burned incense**, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They **did wicked things** that provoked the LORD to anger. **They worshiped idols**, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "**Turn from your evil ways**. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 2 Kings 17:7–13 NIV84, emphasis mine
- **They sacrificed their sons and daughters** in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and **sold themselves to do evil** in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 2 Kings 17:17 NIV84, emphasis mine
- They **sacrificed to demons**, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. Deuteronomy 32:17 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- They sacrificed **their sons and their daughters to demons**. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they **sacrificed to the idols of Canaan**, and the land was desecrated by their blood. Psalm 106:37–38 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The people of Israel must no longer be unfaithful to the LORD by killing their animals in the fields as sacrifices to the **goat-demons**. Leviticus 17:7 GNT, emphasis mine.

Why does God say we are to have no other gods before Him? The law of worship, by beholding we are changed.

- They worshipped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. Jeremiah 2.5 GNT.

Only by worshiping Him, the infinite one, do we advance, develop, mature, and ultimately fulfill God's purpose for us and be images bearers of God. It is Satan's goal to destroy the image of God in human beings and place his image where God's should be.

It is evil to destroy that which is healthy and good, and it is evil to destroy human beings, created in the image of God. False worship destroys love, goodness, compassion, nobility of character, kindness, mercy, patience, tenderness, grace, truth out of the heart, mind, and character of people and instills fear, selfishness, greed, lust, cruelty, abuse, murder, envy, strife, hatred, licentiousness and every demonic attribute.

It is evil to have other gods before God because it destroys the image of God in us, degrading us, ultimately resulting in our eternal death.

Does this truth give insight as to why the following was evil?

- The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the **evil of asking for a king.**” 1 Samuel 12:19, NIV84, emphasis mine.

Why was it evil for them to ask for a king? What was the motive? Was it love and trust in God or distrust? What was the motivating energy, spirit, that led them to ask for kings? And what was the result?

What do you make of this passage?

- So **Solomon did evil** in the eyes of the LORD; **he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.** 1 Kings 11:6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah, but Solomon is described as doing evil whereas David is not, what is the difference?

But David prayed,

- For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and **done what is evil in your sight...** Psalm 51:3–4 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David confessed to having done evil, then why is Solomon chastised by God for doing evil, but God says David followed Him completely?

David goes on to write in the same psalm:

- Surely I was **sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.** Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Psalm 51:5-6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

David’s sin, his evil deed, came from the infection of the spirit of fear and selfishness with which he was born. His failing there was a symptom of the sin condition, but David never turned to other gods, David never sought sin-treatment from other sources, David wasn’t trying to save self through law-keeping, his own goodness, idols, sacrifices, or ritual. David had a heart, a spirit, for God and this event in his life was the symptom of yet to be treated and removed fear and selfishness in his heart. And once it was fully revealed to him, he went to God for a new heart and right spirit. Thus while David suffered from the same evil, sinful, condition that all humanity suffers from, David did not turn away from God to other gods nor to self to try and justify himself as righteous. Thus, David, always turned to God, always followed the Lord, whereas Solomon did not, as the following describes:

- Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been **like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes**. You have done more **evil** than all who lived before you. **You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal...** 1 Kings 14:7–9 NIV84, emphasis mine

And what is the result of choosing evil, choosing anti-love, rejecting God, His design law methods, the truth of His character of love?

So are the sinful actions the true evil or the result of the evil? Then what is true evil? The distrust of God that leads us to have a spirit of fear and selfishness that subsequently leads us to apply, prefer, choose the methods of Satan, we reject truth, love, freedom and embrace imperialism, coercion, control and ultimately external abuse of others.

And if we do not receive God’s cure, if we are not reborn with new hearts and right spirits, like David, and have God’s living law written upon our hearts and minds, then what does evil do to us?

- **Evil will slay the wicked**; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. Psalm 34:21 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- Do not fret because of **evil men** or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass **they will soon wither**, like green plants they will soon die away. Psalm 37:1–2 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What kind of law is described here? Is evil evil because it breaks a rule that causes legal trouble with God and then God must use power to inflict legal punishment, or does evil actually destroy and that is why it is evil?

- **Your wickedness will punish you**; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize **how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God** and have no awe of me,” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. Jeremiah 2:19 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What is being described here? Is God saying if they don’t do good God will use power to harm them? Why does evil result in bitterness? And why is it evil to turn from the Lord? Because the Lord is the source of life, of health, of healing and to turn from Him is the cause of pain, suffering, and death.

How does Satan lead people into evil?

- You love **evil** rather than good, **falsehood** rather than speaking the truth. Psalm 52:3 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Satan is the father of lies and lies believed break the circle of love and trust inciting fear and selfishness. As Satan gets people to believe lies they will be less capable of making healthy choices and thus will deviate from God's design laws for life and suffer various negative results, that suffering will cause more anxiety and fear, which will lead to greater desire for security and if they don't turn to the Lord, then they will ultimately use various other evil methods, harmful methods to try and comfort self, turning to toxic substances to feel better, or destructive behaviors—porn, overeating, gambling, thrill-seeking to try and feel better, but this only causes more harm. Or they employ the methods of control, force, power, and other evil actions to try and protect self at the expense of others.

Satan uses other methods than lies and deception to lead people to do evil:

- Refrain from **anger** and turn from **wrath**; do not **fret—it leads only to evil**. Psalm 37:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? How does anger, wrath, and fretting lead to evil?

James tells us that our evil desires or feelings lead us into temptation—temptation is not sin, but if we don't choose truth and love, and instead choose to gratify the evil desires, the anger, feelings of vengeance, or worry and fret, then those feelings will take control of our imagination and we will begin to fantasize about revenge, hurting those who hurt us, making our enemies pay, which hardens our heart, or we will worry about the future, about our safety, about what will happen and the worry, increased fear, leads away from love and trust to survival methods of coercion and control.

We saw this during COVID when fear caused many good people to embrace the power of the state and seek to force others to do something so they could feel safe.

What does the following describe?

- The **evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him**; the cords of his sin hold him fast. Proverbs 5:22 NIV84, emphasis mine.
- The **righteousness** of the upright **delivers** them, but the **unfaithful are trapped by evil desires**. Proverbs 11:6 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What we choose reacts upon us changing our characters, rewiring our brains, and over time we become changed, we develop either healthy or unhealthy habits by what we choose to embrace and practice.

Habits can be behavioral, such as habits of hygiene, or worship, or exercise. But we can also develop habits of thinking, of how we interpret the world around us. Such habits, developed from upbringing, education, and previous choices in thinking and believing that are wired in and become automated neural pathways that fire without our active decision-making or immediate contemplation and give interpretation, meaning, relevance to events which may or may not be in the events themselves.

There are events and there are interpretations of events. Our interpretations if not prayerfully, intelligently, and truthfully made are vulnerable to old habits, some of which may be evil.

For instance—prejudice, racism, sexism, nationalism are learned biases that become filters upon which people interpret events.

Or other automated pathways that interpret events against the self—“I am no good. No one likes me. I am ugly, stupid, worthless, fat, men are not safe, churches are evil etc.” And people interpret neutral events with some internal automated negative impact.

A Bible example: an event—God thundering at Sinai, resulted in two different interpretations with two different conclusions about God—because of the different states of the hearts and minds of those involved. The people interpreted the event as God being a threat to them, someone who they could not trust and if God had direct contact and interaction with them then He would kill them and thus they requested an intercessor to stand between them and God. They asked that God talk to that intercessor and then that intercessor talk to them. But Moses was there and experienced the same event but had a different interpretation. He said that there was no need to be afraid of God, that God was not against them and only wanted to inspire and motivate them to stop hurting themselves by worshiping false gods.

In other words, God was seeking to get them to turn from evil—the evil of worshiping demons and turn to the good of worshiping Him, the God of love. But the people interpreted the event in a false light, they put a false understanding on God and His actions and taught that God was someone to be terrified of and distance themselves from, someone whom people needed an intercessor to protect them from. And the entire mediatorial priestly ministry was started because of their misinterpretation of events and false beliefs about God who wanted to talk to them directly, but they misunderstood.

This same evil is taught about God in many churches today. That we cannot go to God directly. That we need an intercessor to stand between us and God. That if we don't have that intercessor to pay Him with innocent human blood then God will lash out and kill us. And God is calling for a people today to be like Moses to stand up and let people know that there is no reason to be afraid of God. That God is for us and will save and heal all who trust Him.

Solomon wrote that there are seven things the Lord hates—why are these seven things hateful to the Lord and what makes them evil?

- These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: (1) A proud look, (2) A lying tongue, (3) Hands that shed innocent blood, (4) A heart that devises wicked plans, (5) Feet that are swift in running to evil, (6) A false witness who speaks lies, (7) And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19 NKJV

Are these seven things evil? If so, what makes them evil?

- What did pride cause Lucifer to do? And what was the result to him and all who trusted him?

- What do lies do to love and trust?
- What happens to the person who commits murder? What happens in their heart and mind?
- What happens in the person who plots wickedness?
- What happens in the person who does evil?
- What happens in the person sows discord and then to the community where it is sown?

Do all these things cause legal problems in the heavenly court, or do they actually destroy the image of God in people, hardening hearts, searing consciences, corrupting characters?

What does this text mean?

- To **fear the LORD is to hate evil**; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. Proverbs 8:13 NIV84 emphasis mine

Why is it that to fear the Lord means we hate evil? What does fear mean? Awe, revere, respect and thus those who admire, revere, respect the Lord will hate evil because it is the antithesis of good, and all good comes from God.

- **Woe** to those who **call evil good and good evil**, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Isaiah 5:20 NIV84, Emphasis mine.

Why? Why is woe to these people? What does woe mean?

The dictionary defines it as profound grief and distress, why would those who call evil good and good evil experience profound grief and stress? Is it because they get into legal trouble, or because evil violates the laws upon which life is built and the only result is injury, loss, grief, and stress?

- But **your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.** [What does this mean? What does it mean that God won't hear? It is simple—God is love and God wants only good for us, so He doesn't "listen" respond positively to the requests from people that will harm them. Like a parent whose 6 year old says after having repeatedly told no and why no still says, "daddy, can I have a cigarette" the father will say, "I'm not listening to that."] For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched. Their cobwebs are useless for clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make. Their **deeds are evil deeds**, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their **thoughts are evil thoughts**; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. Isaiah 59:2–8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But the righteous shun evil:

- Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and **shuns evil.**” Job 1:8 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does it mean to shun evil? It means we turn to God in trust embracing and practicing His design law methods into our lives.

We are in a world filled with evil—but God’s grace still abounds. We must decide, what spirit will we identify with and choose to be animated by, the spirit of fear and selfishness or the spirit of love and trust.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson spends a significant amount of time exploring the question of why God, who is good, would allow evil to exist. Thoughts?

In Wednesday’s lesson it presents the reality of Free Will, read second paragraph,

- The freewill defense is the view that evil is the result of the misuse of creaturely free will. God, then, is not to blame for evil, because evil is the result of creatures misusing the free will that God has given us for good reasons. Why, however, would God give such free will? In this regard, C. S. Lewis once wrote that “free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other. . . . And for that they must be free.”—*Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p. 52. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 56.

To me this is the only answer to why evil exists—because God is love and love requires real freedom. God could have made sophisticated robots, but robots cannot love. Thus, God created beings who have the freedom to choose to break the laws of love, the protocols upon which are built to operate, but the only result of that is ruin and death, unless healed by the Creator.

Does the fact that God created a universe in which freewill exists mean God caused evil or God is the source of evil?

Does the fact that God foresaw its existence mean that God caused it? Or because He foresaw it does that mean God ordained it or wanted it to happen?

Consider this Bible commentary:

- The **plan for our redemption was not an afterthought**, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an **unfolding of the principles** that from eternal ages have been the **foundation of God's throne**. From the beginning, **God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man** through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence**, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So **great was His love** for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. *The Desire of Ages* p. 22, emphasis mine.

Do you agree with this? What do you hear?

What does the plan of salvation being an unfolding of the principles that are the foundation of God’s government mean?

What are those principles? Truth, love, and freedom. The design laws that are built into the operations of reality. When sin entered love, truth, freedom met the lies, fear, selfishness face to face—ultimately in Jesus who lived out the design laws of God in humanity perfectly, revealed the truth that destroys the lies, restored the law of love, which is the law of life, into the human species, and exposed Satan and his methods as the source of pain, suffering, and death, while confirming God is not only good, but is the source of life.

What is the only way God wins? How do God’s methods of truth, love, freedom win in the end?

Can God get a safe and secure and sinless universe of love and trust by imposed law with law enforcement? What is the only way?

Satan’s system of government is imposed law with coercive enforcement, justice through punishment, rule-keeping.

And how much of the Christian world is teaching that God’s government functions on Satan’s principles of imposed law and law-enforcement?

But God cannot get love, trust, loyalty, devotion by imposed law and law enforcement, it is only through truth, love, and freedom.

Consider Saul of Tarsus before Damascus road. A worshiper of Yahweh, a believer in the Bible, Sabbath, sanctuary, coming Messiah, Creation, faithful tithe payer, zealous for God’s cause, a member of the only church on earth that God had blessed up to that time. Yet, he used the power of the state seeking to enforce religious dogma through imposed law and punishment.

After Damascus road, he still worshiped Yahweh, but now knew that Yahweh was Jesus. He still worshiped on the Sabbath, still believed in the coming Messiah, still paid a faithful tithe, still believed in the inspiration of Scripture—but now he wrote in Romans 14, when religious differences occur, that

every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5). It is only when we are persuaded in our own minds that our hearts are changed, and God's plan of salvation is to heal hearts and minds, to save people from sin, from evil, to remove fear, selfishness, and distrust and write into our inmost being love and trust and faithfulness so that we can be like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, people who are trustworthy, people who would rather die than betray God, people who would give their lives in love for others, as Revelation describes the remnant:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They overcame by the blood of the Lamb—the life of Jesus which they have internalized and partaken of so that they have a new life, no longer the old self, sinful, fear ridden living within, but Christ lives within, the motives, desires, methods of truth, love, freedom—the pure life of Christ. And because they have been reborn with the blood/life of Christ within, they give the word of testimony that is the same testimony Jesus gave, the testimony that God is not like Satan alleges, the testimony that Jesus and the Father are one and God's laws are design laws and life is only possible in harmony with God and His design laws for life. And thus, they live that law of love in sacrificial service to others.

But when Romanism is embraced instead of the truth, people read the blood of Jesus as a legal payment they claim to their legal books in heaven, and the testimony such legalists give is the testimony of Satan as they testify to the world the lie that God's law functions like human law, and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death that He will impose upon people who do not claim the proper legal payment. This is the evil that infects the church, the pagan, false, demonic worship of God's enemy under the name of God.

TUESDAY

- The sanctuary provides part of the key to the problem of evil—namely, recognizing there is a righteous Judge who will bring justice and judgment in His own time. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 55.

Thoughts? What does this paragraph suggest? Does it suggest a legal process?

When Jesus separates the sheep from the goats does His judgment of who is a sheep and who is a goat make a sheep into a sheep and a goat into a goat, or are they what they are?

And who decides if a human ends up in the sheep or goat category?

Does God's judgment in the end determine whether a person is saved or lost?

Does God's judgment contain anything other than accurate diagnosis of reality, of what actually is?

And what does it mean for God to bring justice? Does it mean God will use power to inflict punishment for sin?

If God did this what would be the result? It would be the method of Satan and it would violate liberty, and it would result in increased fear, and it would cause the spread of sin and would not result its elimination or a secure universe.

I recommend you read the entire chapter *It Is Finished* in the book *The Desire of Ages*. This chapter focuses on Jesus' death on the cross, but here are some excerpts:

- **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion... *The Desire of Ages* p. 758, emphasis mine. [Christ was the truth, the Word made flesh, the living embodiment of God, the One who the fullness of God dwelt bodily. And what did Christ reveal in His human life? How did Christ respond to injustice? How did Christ wield power? Whom did Christ compel and coerce? Whom did Christ inflict punishment upon? Whom did Christ accuse? Do we see a different character lived out by Jesus than by any other human? Do we see a different law lived out? Do we see a different method of governing? Is this a lesson for us today?]

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; **but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love;** and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and **truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine [This is one of the most important truths ever to be revealed and one for which all the saved will embrace and practice. Truth and love are the prevailing powers of God's government. God wants our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship and this cannot be achieved by legal means, by legislation and the infliction of punishment, by compelling and coercing. In fact, those means lead to more rebellion. All compelling power is found in Satan's government, the Lord never does this.]

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, [By having God's law of love written into hearts, where beings are settled into truth, love, liberty and are genuine friends of God, who would rather die than betray Him or live out of harmony with God's design] and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given **for Satan to develop the principles** which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe.... *The Desire of Ages* p. 759, emphasis mine [What are Satan's principles that needed to be developed so their corruption and destructiveness could be revealed? The rule of law, imposed law, coercion, force, the governments of this world!]

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the **unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.** Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. **The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.** *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine [What broke the last link of sympathy? It was the revelation of truth—Jesus revealing God's character, methods, principle and Satan revealing his. Why was Satan's work restricted to this earth after the cross? Was there a force shield? What kind of war is it? It is a war of ideas, of lies versus truth and the battlefield is the hearts and minds of intelligent beings. So, when the intelligences in heaven were settled into the truth about God, when all sympathy for Satan was lost, there were no minds or hearts willing to listen to Satan anymore, none of his ideas, distortions, lies, innuendos, or propaganda had any impact on heavenly beings anymore. Thus, his work was restricted to the hearts and minds of the only beings in the universe who still believed him, valued him, think like him and will follow him—human beings.]

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. **The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy.** [What else was there? Wasn't the issue only about who was telling the truth, who they needed to trust? No—it isn't enough to be eternally secure to believe Jesus is telling the truth, we must also **understand why this is so.** It isn't enough to be secure to believe your math teacher knows the answers to the problems, in order to be secure one must know how to do math, we must mature to be able to discern right from wrong, to not only love and trust God, but to be understanding friends of God.] **The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man,** Satan's existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve... *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine [For our sake Satan was to continue on longer—how is this for our sake? Because we must decide, we must see for ourselves the difference between the methods and principles of God and that of Satan. And if we can't see this difference in the subtle ways they manifest, then what will God allow to happen? Won't He allow more and more evidence, more truth, more obvious differences to be manifested so that we can see the difference between the principles of God and that of Satan? This is the rise of the beast of Revelation—a system built completely on imposed law, coercion, infliction of punishment all under the guise of seeking to make a better world, to improve lives, to save lives. So what was the specific concept that we all needed to understand more clearly that required Satan's existence to be continued? Here is the next paragraph.]

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice.** [What kind of law is Satan describing? A law which created beings can

make, a system of rules that require oversight and coercive enforcement. This is Satan's lie about God's law and as we look through history we see this repeats itself over and over again. And at the end of time, the beastly system of Revelation uses imposed law to force its way, to create mandates, to restrict travel, to force compliance, no one can buy or sell...] ...**God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.** [What is the basis of this allegation? What kind of justice is this? What law is this based upon? Again this is imposed law, and thus the allegation is that to not impose punishment is to not uphold the law. However, when we understand Design law, we realize that justice is not about punishment, but restoring or healing people back to harmony with the design-law.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. [Different position how? Different legal position? Or different position in objective reality? Note how] Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. **There was no more that God could do to save him.** [Why? Was Jesus unwilling to give His life for Lucifer? Was Jesus unwilling to pay a "legal penalty"? Didn't we just read that the death of Christ was for angels and the unfallen worlds as well as humans, so Jesus did die for angels—just as Colossians says, "all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross." Then, did God love Lucifer less than humans? Was God playing favorites? No! No! It was because Lucifer had destroyed in himself the capacity to respond to truth and love. He had seen, understood, and participated in God's love and rejected it. Thus he changed himself, hardened his own heart and corrupted his character. This again, is design law. Just the same way Pharaoh hardened his heart—when truth is presented a person must decide to accept or reject it, when we reject truth we harden, when more truth comes we have an opportunity to repent and be healed, but it requires humbling oneself and acknowledging where the lie was believed. If we refuse and instead reject the additional truth then we harden ourselves more until at some point we destroy the ability to respond to love and truth. This is what Lucifer did. Adam and Eve, while deceived, while infected with fear and selfishness, had not rejected truth that would win them to repentance and had not destroyed within themselves the faculties capable of responding to truth and love.] But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. **The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God.** [What is it man needs? Is it a legal penalty paid? No, the legal solution is what people think up when they are operating under Satan's false view of God's law. But when we understand the truth, then we realize we need to be set right in heart and mind with God, meaning we need the lies removed and truth to win us to trust and love restored within the heart by the indwelling Spirit of God, who takes Christ's victory and reproduces it in us!] *The Desire of Ages* p. 761, emphasis mine

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; **but mercy does not set aside justice.** [What does this mean? What law lens do we view justice through imposed or design? What difference does it make?] **The law reveals the attributes of God's character,** [which is

what?]) and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. [Why? For the same reason the law of respiration cannot be changed to meet a person drowning. God's law is the protocol upon which life is constructed to operate.] God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."** 2 Corinthians 5:19. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [Which means that Christ was carrying out God's purpose to fix what sin did to humanity, set humanity back into harmony with God's law—design! Notice the next paragraph's description about justice.]

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character,** a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. [Notice this is Christ, as a human, using human abilities, developing a perfect human character and then healing humans back to this perfect state. This is literal not metaphorical.] **Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.** God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [If you see someone drowning, is it right and just to pull them from the water and administer CPR to revive them? What law are you operating under? Why, if you want them to live, must you do this? This is God's justice and what He accomplished for us through Christ. He pulls us from drowning in sin and breathes into us the breath of life, the Spirit of God Himself comes into us to give us new life with new motives and desires! We are resurrected from sin and death into a new life in Christ.]

God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. [Mercy is God not abandoning sinners to die, not retaliating, not seeking to punish; Justice, doing what is right by sending Christ to destroy sin and restore God's law in humanity in order for us to be restored to life, to be set right or made right, justified, this is what is right or just. Justice is the sustaining of the operations of God's laws, including the law of liberty, justice is giving people freedom to reject God's healing remedy and reap what they sow.] **Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice.** He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine [How does Satan attempt to divorce mercy from justice? By getting us to believe the imposed law lie, which results in a split Godhead in which Christ in mercy dies to pay a legal penalty for our sins to a wrathful father who is the administrator of just punishments. Thus, justice is separated from mercy in the way we perceive and describe God—leading to theologies in which Jesus must protect us from the Father. 1. Jesus pleads His blood to the Father. 2. Jesus covers us with His blood so the Father can't see us. 3. Jesus applies His blood to our record books so the Father can't

punish us for our bad deeds. 4. Jesus is our heavenly attorney to argue our case before the Father to protect us from His judgment and punishment. 5 Jesus took our place and was executed by His Father on the cross to pay for our sins. All of this is the divorcing of mercy from truth and justice by created a false caricature of the Godhead.]

By His life and His death, Christ proved that God's justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan's charges were refuted. [How? What was the just or right thing for God to do? Fix the problem, which was accomplished through Christ developing a perfect character. What charges of Satan were refuted? That every sin must meet its punishment, that transgressing God's law requires punishment. These lies were refuted at the Cross. But Satan still gets legal theologians to teach the lie when they teach that all sins, past, present, future were put on Christ and punished by God at the Cross.] God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love. *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine

Another deception was now to be brought forward. [History now repeats itself] Satan declared that mercy destroyed justice, **that the death of Christ abrogated the Father's law.** [What kind of law can be rescinded, changed, or abrogated? Imposed law, the kind of laws created beings make. Design law cannot be changed or abrogated. Thus Satan's allegations that began in heaven that God's law requires punishment, i.e. imposed law, now repeats itself and is accepted by the vast majority of humans, including Christians.] Had it been possible for the law to be changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have died... **It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross.** [Why? Because the law is the protocol of life, and only in harmony with it is there salvation, or healing!] **Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it.** [How? Twofold, one by declaring the law is no longer binding, which is only possible if the law were imposed rules. But, also, amongst those who claim the law is still binding, by tricking them into accepting the imposed construct, thus they claim loyalty to God's law and all the commandments, while they present it as imposed rules requiring God to inflict punishment. They, thereby misrepresent God, the Cross and God's law and ultimately practice Satan's methods of coercion as they will one day force other on some point of conscience or go along with governments that do, as long as it is for a good cause, perhaps to save lives.] **Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan...** [This is where we are today in Christianity, fighting a battle over God's law, not which day of worship, but which law—imposed or Design law. We are to call people back to worship Him who made the heavens... to Designer worship.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 762, emphasis mine

By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world... [How? Not simply by a change in rules, but a change in the entire idea of law from the law the Creator builds life upon, to imposed rules so that people will seek to achieve justice through human governments and enforce their beliefs upon others. Notice the next paragraph...] *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. [Here we have it—the use of compelling power, which is always used in imposed law systems. This is what is happening in the world today and far too many Christians are going along with it. But they will say, “Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons and performed miracles in your name—we did this to save lives. And of course, in your name, to honor you and save lives, we forced people against their will to get the job because we know that you want to save lives and we know those people are ignorant, are not scientific and that the job isn’t a religious issue, it is a science issue. So we know you would want us to coerce, compel and force in order to save lives.” And Jesus replies, “Get away from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.”] *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. *The Desire of Ages* p. 763, emphasis mine

[Notice the paragraph, it is about developing character, character of love like Jesus, in which we sacrifice ourselves for others, present truth in love and leave others free. Or, character like the beast, where we use compelling power to coerce conformity! This is the test we all must face. And the final deception will be so subtle that if possible the elect will be deceived? How because it will be set up as a law for the good, for saving lives, for protecting others, for saving the planet. And those who won't comply will be presented as the enemy of the good. But notice what this author says comes next, after these two classes have formed, after every character is tested.]

Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch... [Why? Mercy—God would not use His power to keep people in a place of torment, but grants them their choice to be separate from Him, the only source of life.] *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. [This is design law, not imposed penalties!] He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. **God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice.** By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that **His very presence is to them a consuming fire.** The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. [What did angels not understand? God's law as design law, as an outworking of His character of love. They were confused by Satan's lies that God's law functions like human law. Thus history repeats itself as humans suffer the same confusion and many today are willing to use Satan's methods to coerce consciences in order to seek justice or save lives.] Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; **but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed**, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine [This is how many Christians, including in our own church, view things; they fail to understand the truth of God's law and instead teach the same distortion that God must kill the wicked, rather than the truth that unremedied sin itself results in death! And because they accept Satan's lie about God's law, they are willing to accept Satan's methods of compelling others for a good cause.]

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, **the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable.** Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. *The Desire of Ages* p. 764, emphasis mine