

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-05-25—IS GOD REAL?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

One of the most important and fundamental statutes in God's Law of Agape Love deals with repentance and forgiveness of offenses. Clearly, reconciliation is *required* for eternal life. Below is a recap of the very words spoken by Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>:

MATTHEW 6:14-15 “For if you forgive men their trespasses [*offenses*], your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 “**But if you do not forgive men their trespasses [*offenses*], neither will your Father forgive your trespasses [*offenses*].**

MATTHEW 18:34-35 “And **his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers** until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 “**So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses [*offenses*].**”

There is almost no topic of conversation among brethren where there are not differing opinions. Except for the important matters pertaining to salvation, many mysteries exist in the Word of God; however, none of them should be a catalyst for offenses. Since deciding to publish my thoughts on the website, I have received the occasional comment from perfect strangers who are filled with anger, hatred, and malice. Part of their tirade includes belittling me against their years of keeping the holydays and their vast scholarly biblical knowledge, all done with prideful perfection. I have learned much from many brethren who have been faithful for many decades but always find it hard to listen and learn from anyone who is condemning. Their vitriol is also a sad contrast to the agape love that is the core of the Bible and the coming Kingdom.

It is ironic, too, that all these vehement comments were addressing topics that are absolutely non-salvational. The last comment condemned me over a topic that is *not even mentioned in the Bible*. I shake my head in disbelief when I read them because I seriously doubt they would say those things if they remembered God hears every word. Scripture is clear: the consequence of anger, hatred, and malice is eternal death. Paul rebuked the saints for this:

ROMANS 2:1-9 Therefore **you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself;** for you who judge practice the same things. 2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. 3 And **do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?** 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But **in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent [*unrepentant*] heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,** 6 who “will render to each one according to his

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<sup>1</sup> Also Mark 11:26.

deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—**indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil,** of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

I would guess that most have never personally met or talked with any President of the USA. Whether you agree with them politically is beside the point. But does *anyone* doubt his existence or authority even though they have never seen the leader of this country? If no one believes the president sits in the Oval Office then why do people submit to the laws that he signs?

This should not be any different when it comes to God. No one has seen Him, but most believe He exists and has all authority. Why, then, do people who are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ act as if God is NOT real? God the Father and Jesus Christ have commanded us to put away anger, hatred, and malice and reconcile offenses. In clear violation of this, some deliberately TRY to offend. Given their behavior, they must not believe God is REAL or that He rules over all of the heavens and earth, requires obedience from all, and will harshly judge those who refuse to do so with the gravest of consequences—and that is a fearful thing<sup>2</sup>.

Jesus Christ, speaking of the Tribulation to come, said "the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). He was not speaking to unbelievers but to the *ekklesia*. What are the fruits of the Spirit of Life from God? Agape love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, mercy, humility, affection, meekness, compassion, and forgiveness<sup>3</sup>. What fills the heart when love is absent? Anger, hatred, and malice and the fruits of the Spirit wither and die in the midst of such emotions.

Resorting to anger, hatred, and malice when confronted with differences is something that was taught to members in various ways in the church organization wherein I was baptized. It was the basis of preaching, newsletters, and radio and TV broadcasts where the leaders and preachers condemned Protestants, Catholics, and anyone else not associated with them for not keeping God's Law, especially the Sabbath and holydays. This was followed by demands of repentance with angry words. They knew the world is deceived but they also believed they should be condemned for their ignorance. Instead of pulling aside the curtain of deception with the joyous message of the Kingdom, salvation of repentance through Jesus Christ, and obedience to a perfect Law of Love, they used words of anger, hatred, and malice accompanied with harsh looks and fist-pounding to get their attention. Looking back, it had an impact—they *convinced* many of the Truth but time has proven that a number of them were never *convicted* of it.

Being convinced of something is NOT the same as being *convicted*. When someone is convicted of something that was counter to their previous beliefs, they are not only convinced in their mind but they are humbled in the HEART!

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<sup>2</sup> Heb. 10:31.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 5; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12; Phil 2:1.

Conviction is KNOWING we were wrong, ACCEPTING we were wrong, REGRETING we were wrong, and CHANGING our ways accordingly.

Is that not the same as repentance? Can anyone repent or forgive while they are angry, hateful, or malicious? Those who are filled with anger, hate, and malice may be CONVINCED of God, but they are not CONVICTED. If they were, they would be HUMBLE toward others because we not only received everything from God, but all of us were ENEMIES of Him:

COLOSSIANS 1:21 And **you, who once were alienated and enemies** in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.

And what does God require of everyone who were once HIS enemies?

LUKE 6:27-35 “But I say to you who hear: **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 “bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.** 29 “To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. 30 “Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. 31 “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. 32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 “And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 “And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 “**Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. 37 “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

Biblically, an enemy refers to anyone who is *hostile, odious, or hateful*, which can include a brother or sister in Christ. However, the true *ekklesia* are to PRAY for their enemies and do GOOD for them. Why? Those who are no longer enemies of God are to become as He is—we are to love our enemies just as He loved us when we were His enemies. Responding to evil with *evil* is the way of Satan whereas responding to evil with *good* is the Way of God. God’s children must purge their hearts of Satan’s fruits:

EPHESIANS 4:31-32 **Let all bitterness [literally, poison], wrath, anger, clamor [vehement shouting], and evil speaking [reviling] be put away from you, with [including] all malice.** 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

God repeats this over and over and over again in scriptures such as Colossians 3:8; Psalm 37:8; Galatians 5:19-20; Matthew 5:22; Proverbs 19:11; James 1:20; and Romans 12:19. Anyone who is filled with anger, hatred, and malice toward brethren will NOT have eternal life. The Kingdom of God will be an eternity with billions of people having DIFFERING thoughts, ideas, feelings, and desires. Satan turned to

anger, hatred, and malice to resolve his differences and we know how that worked out. Differences are not the issue—it is HOW those differences are resolved that matters. There is no place for anger, hatred, and malice in the Kingdom. Instead, differences will be resolved with humility in agape love. Those who fail to grow in agape love and put aside anger, hatred, and malice in this life will be among those who weep and gnash their teeth regardless of how much of the Bible they know and how perfectly they keep the Law.

The heart is vitally important because it is the basis for relationships and resolving differences. Those with agape love will show compassion, mercy, and kindness. Those filled with evil will show anger, hatred, and malice. Regardless of what is in someone's heart and even if their judgments perfectly align with God's Law, the heart is also the basis for God's reciprocal judgment upon each person:

**ECCLESIASTES 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.**

**MATTHEW 7:1-2 “Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.**

**JAMES 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

Is God not REAL when He says He will NOT FORGIVE the offenses of those who do not forgive others? Is God not REAL when He says He will judge WITHOUT MERCY all those who show no mercy? I can only guess that God must not be REAL to those filled with anger, hatred, and malice; otherwise, they would FEAR the judgment they are bringing upon themselves.

It will be a dreadful day when the wicked are destroyed in the Lake of Fire. If we truly love our enemies, it will be a day of grief and sadness to witness their deaths. Even though the judgment of God is a just, merciful, and necessary end to their miserable and tormented lives, it will be a day of sorrow for people who lose eternal life. Too many will end up destroyed but some simply because they do not believe God is REAL enough to fear Him and put aside anger, hatred, and malice. All deserve our love, good works, blessings, and prayers but especially our enemies<sup>4</sup>. After all, God our Father sacrificed His Son Jesus Christ for Their enemies.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 6:27.