

Exodus 34v5,6 *“And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the Name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed,*

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and Truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”.

The title of our addresses today for our study day is “Proclaiming the Name of the LORD”. There is a need to educate people about this. We should have an understanding about God and His character and purpose which is in harmony with what the scriptures teach. We need to proclaim His Name abroad. Yahweh Elohim which means “I will be mighty ones” or “I am those who are empowered”! The Almighty empowers His children on to greater things.

We are made in God’s image, physically we look like the Angels who were created to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They were made first but with the human race in mind. The angels have no purpose except as God has declared to minister to us! God has done so much for His children, and they are ungrateful and selfish in their exploitation of His blessings including the gift of life itself. The intellectual aspect of being in the image of God is paramount. We can spiritually be like Him but only if we make those choices which are in harmony with the way we have been made. We all have the gift of a conscience which can produce guilt in our minds when we have done something that is morally wrong.

A psychopath is unable to empathise with others and has no guilt to guide them in the choices they make. Is this purely an inbuilt deficiency or is it partly learned behaviour? God will not condemn people for something they have no choice in doing. If God condemns all such people, then by definition, as God is fair and balanced, they must be responsible for their own actions. They have learned to be like this. They learn it because it appears to shield them from the consequences of their actions. They fail to move beyond the basic selfishness we all rightly have as totally dependant babies, to thinking about how our actions affect others.

Essentially this means that our consciences which God has given us and which are an essential part of who we are can be trained and directionalised by us in ways that are out of sync with society and more importantly out of sync with God’s standards of righteousness. The Bible speaks of “searing our consciences with a hot iron” 1 Timothy 4v2 which means that we close off inbuilt responses God put inside us because we are made in His image. Guilt is a necessary force for good, in a similar way that we cannot function properly as a person without the ability to feel pain.

The New Testament uses various passages to illustrate this very point if we look for them. In 1 Peter 3v16 we read “having a **good** conscience”. This implies that we can have the opposite, that is a bad conscience. Hebrews 13v8 reinforces this when it speaks of “We trust we have a **good** conscience in all things”. A good conscience needs

to be developed and retained. Jesus used the presence of a conscience in how he reacted to the woman caught in adultery in the very act! All left the scene *“being convicted by their own conscience”*. Paul says that he tried to live his life *“to have always a conscience void of offence towards God”* Acts 24v16. The letter of Titus warns the reader of the need to be aware of what can happen, *“but even their mind and conscience is defiled”*. The ability to shape your conscience then is clear. We can choose what we do to fashion our mental landscape the way we wish to engage with guilt, either seeking to avoid such confrontations of intense embarrassment or to seek to avoid the circumstances for which we will feel guilty because we have sinned.

If we were unable to feel guilty then we have no moral compass by which to steer our spiritual lives. Even psychopaths have a code by which they work and which determines their success or failure in their interactions with others. Some are good at exploiting others and often play the victim to obtain sympathy from those who might otherwise look away or ignore them. They are often attention seekers who require to be the centre of everything and cannot accept that someone else occupies the centre stage and that they have been relegated to only a more minor role.

Guilt means that we have moved away from innocence into moral compromise or just plain evil which can sit upon us and overwhelm us with feeling we cannot easily cope with. It affects us in ways that we cannot control and is a heavy burden to bear. People will notice that we are struggling with our mood if guilt sits upon us. It is not something that can be disguised and therefore people wish to avoid the feeling. Anyone capable of capping off such feelings would be tempted to shut it down.

God the Eternal, the Almighty, the Omniscient, our Creator, the protector of Israel and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ wishes to be known and appreciated by His children. He commands them to proclaim His Name. The way in which He is to be understood is through His actions which manifest His character. His actions in judgment are twofold showing the balancing elements which define Him. He is not exclusively one thing. He is One but within that oneness is completion. He incorporates both sides of a thing. He is the very definition of goodness but is also the creator of evil, which is a natural complement and counterbalance and not left to another to control. Isaiah 45v7 *“I form light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the LORD do all these things”*. There is no god of evil in opposition to Him. He is alone in majesty and power.

God made mankind with the ability to choose. He permitted Adam to ruin the wonderful world He had created as a necessary price which was worth paying in order to advance the generation of a godly seed. This cannot be done by any other method. There is no other way for this to occur. God was not experimenting. He was not conducting tests to see what would or would not work. He knows the end from the beginning. The way of sacrifice was always going to be the only way that would produce what was required, the only way of salvation in any scenario is Jesus, he is not just the only way for us in our circumstances. There is practically no other solution to the generation of god-children. Having the potential to sin is a requirement for this to work.

The only response to sin is death. Having a deathless sinner is morally wrong, the idea of an immortal sinner is absurd, it goes against everything that God has said about sin and about death. This is axiomatic and the introduction of this concept is a fracture of

basic logic. Immortality is by definition sinless. Immortal angels cannot sin. They are there to fulfil a role which God has declared. They manifest His Name to others on His behalf as perfectly obedient and in total harmony with His designs and purpose.

Sin must be stopped; it cannot be allowed to remain indefinitely. *"The soul that sinneth it shall die"*. This is God's decree. He knows what He is doing. He did not stumble upon this solution. He has thought it all through, this is the only way, the divine way, for the principles which make up His character to be seen. God is sovereign He works within the bounds of logic and correctness. He does not impose a chaotic unstable existence upon His creation but has deliberately set up cause and effect, action and reaction, the ramifications and consequences which must follow from the decisions we take. Man gets to choose what to do, but he does not get to choose the consequences of those actions.

Some reason that God just arbitrarily forgives everybody because He is a God of love. This misunderstands both what God is about, and what love is. To love someone is not to let them ruin themselves in a blanket of immaturity and recklessness. Children are children because they are protected from the consequences of their own mistakes. If we cocoon them from this for a while, we cannot cocoon them for ever, sooner or later they need to wake up to decision making and the inevitable ability to get things wrong. If there was no possibility of getting anything wrong, then there is also the issue that we can never get it right. If there is no possibility of failure, then there is also no success, no victory to be achieved, it would all just be vain empty hollow and pointless. A bland fake world with no real meaning just a game we would be playing which delivers no real satisfaction just perhaps the entertainment for the moment until boredom sets in.

When Adam sinned the consequences of his folly reverberate down through time and has a massive effect on all of creation. When he brought death into the world, it brought death not just to himself but to his progeny, they would inherit the consequences of his failure. It also included the whole of creation. Now animals would also die. Originally when everything was very good there was no death for animals also. Roans 8v 22 *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."* The biosphere was rebalanced in a distinct and different way than before. Now death had to be factored in to how everything was to work. Before Adam sinned, there was no death. After he sinned it touched everything and nothing was free from its corruption and contamination. Only the eradication of sin could reverse the introduction of death. That is where the victory of Christ comes in. Despite the propensities of his fallen nature, he was able to subdue the power of sin within himself and set out the means of living a life in loving obedience to God and to the glory of his Father. If it was impossible for him to fail, then there was no victory only an illusion of one. The second Adam succeeded in utter contrast to the first sinner.

God is a god of justice and righteousness. He has elevated the pursuit of godliness to the highest level possible. He wants us to replicate Himself in character and behaviour. He desires to see His children mature in choosing the good and rejecting the evil. He wishes to see them adopting righteousness for themselves and their progeny, and to see them turning away from sin in all its forms. They can only do this in a world where decisions mean something. If there were no consequences for our actions, then our actions are ultimately futile. He has imposed upon creation the condemnation of sin. He

could just have destroyed the whole world and started again, but that would imply that Adam could have succeeded in obeying God and that Christ was not needed. However, the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. God always knew that there was no other way. How would Adam's children have each been elevated to their own immortality? Everyone would have had to have been presented with the same choice, which is not possible because once the first, Adam, had been successful this influences all subsequent choices because the facts on the ground have changed. Adam would have been an immortal demonstration to what he was asked to accept on faith.

The idea that God has to forgive everyone is to set up a recurring sin and mercy cycle and to make forgiveness something to be expected or demanded. God exacts from us less than we deserve. We deserve to die. We do not die straight away but are afforded the element of time to reflect and to repent and to choose to be different. It is only when the reality of sin hits home that we are truly appreciative of what God is doing for us and to us. Psalm 51 expresses this so well. *"Have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness: according unto thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightiest be justified when Thou speakest and be clear when Thou judgest."*

God does not need to justify Himself to anyone, but He has chosen to do so. He wants us to understand His standards and the way He acts and why He does so. He requires appreciation. This is not for some cheap self-gratification "look how great I am" but in order for us to be like Him we must first understand Him. It is because He loves us that He wants us to be like Himself. The only way that is possible is for us to see the choices which make up God. He chooses to be good because He wants to be good. He accepts the necessity of evil, the imposing of unpleasant consequences for bad decisions, because that is the only way we can learn to make good decisions.

Those who choose to live their lives remote and isolated from God are given the gift of life for however long God determines it to be for. They have no right to life, but they do have a right to death. We all deserve to die and this we will all do, but God has a plan which revolves around those who are *"the heirs of salvation"*. He knows who these are and the angels are sent to interact with them in a way that does not happen with others. God knows the end from the beginning, but He still permits us to live out our lives without foreclosing on our chosen foolishness. He does not interrupt us and say, you will not repent from your sin so I might as well kill you now! He could do so and has every right to do so, but He chooses to let us continue in our folly for a little longer. Many take this indulgence as evidence that He does not exist rather than permission from Him to choose even foolishly. *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"* Ecclesiastes 8v11. God endures this injustice for the sake of the greater justice of delay. Reading on we see the wisdom which Solomon perceived under inspiration *"Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: but it shall not be well with*

the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; Because he feared not before God. Verses 12,13"

When God does intervene by imposing judgment now in this life there is always a reason. He is teaching us, He is demonstrating His standards, He is being consistent and open and honest. He does not punish us for our sins if they are inevitable. We receive the wages of our sins which is death, but this is not even punishment as such if we cannot but do otherwise. It is only punishment if we could and should avoid sin! Can we avoid it? Yes, we can because Jesus Christ did. As God has made us, He knows what we are capable of. Sin within, the imposition of our internal propensities, these we did not ask for, nor can we avoid them, they will die, and the old man must be put to death. The destruction or death of death will only follow when sin has been defeated in all mankind. This is the final judgement, until then God judges mankind individually, as He sees fit.

"God does not clear the guilty". We reap what we sow. There is a standard of divine justice. God judges righteously. He does not forgive some and condemn others for no reason. What then are the reasons for the imposition of divine judgment.

At the judgement seat only those responsible to Christ will be there. Knowledge brings responsibility. *"He that rejected me, and received with not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* John 12v48. This aspect of judgment is fair because the way it operates is pre-advised. God has told mankind how and when and why and who and what about judgment. That man chooses not to listen, to Him, nor to alter their lives in accordance with that information is the great sadness. The whole basis of our condemned world is that it was given another chance to reform and repent. As God repeatedly says, *"All day long have I held out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."* Romans 10v26. Israel the favoured nation who grew up knowing the Law, did not listen, do we expect the uneducated gentiles to be different?

That God imposes judgment only to the third and fourth generation informs the reader of a few things. First that God limits the effects of transgression. He does not relentlessly inflict succeeding generations with the ramifications of their ancestors' mistakes. A society has to be very extreme for it to be eradicated in its entirety. This rarely happens, but it does happen. God warns before taking action. He sends prophets even to wicked Nineveh and the violent Assyrians were given opportunity to repent of their excesses. Jonah struggled with that. He wanted them destroyed so that they would not subsequently come against his people Israel and brutally invade and enslave them. That they would deserve such a punishment was not foremost in the mind of Jonah. He acted out of a false love of his nation. If he really loved them, he would want them to be exposed to whatever would bring about a reformation and transformation as God did. Was God cruel because He knew that Israel would only repent at a later stage and therefore engineered an evil catastrophe to discipline them?

"Shall the clay say to the potter, why hast thou made me thus?" No, it is not our prerogative to call out God as unfair, when it is unfair for us to continue in life without receiving the punishment we have all earned because of our folly in sin. It is fair that we

are judged for our sins, and we should trust God that He knows what He is doing and that what He does is for the benefit of those who shall be the heirs of salvation.

Even a wayward family can be reformed over time. Time is a great healer. The intensity of our emotions can be taken out of the equation if we do not continually rekindle the old hatred. This perpetuation of perceived injustice stokes many fires of anger and bitterness. Whilst this is often a good thing to allow to be extinguished in our own lives, as we remember the example of Samuel and Agag we can see that this is not universally so. 1 Samuel 15v32 *"Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said as thy sword has made women childless so shall thy mother be childless among women and Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal"*. This act of divine justice must be in keeping with the God of love as other scriptures declare. It is each our own responsibility to rationalise that to our own satisfaction. Also, the Bible teaches that Jesus is the judge of the future age at his promised return. There is an often-forgotten passage in the book of Revelation which is passed over or never read which illustrates this see chapter 14v10 *"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb."* Rather than Lucifer and any evil cohorts revelling over those being punished in hell, the Bible paints an entirely different picture of the responsible Christ not revelling but accepting his responsibility as the judge of all the earth to witness the consequences of the passing of his judgement on God's behalf over those who are rejectors of the divine opportunity to repent.

It is this rejection of the prerogative and power of God, this refusal to look to God as the source of their possible redemption which is the unforgiveable sin. Mark 3v28,29 *"Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and blasphemies where with so ever they shall blaspheme but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness but is in danger of eternal damnation."* The context is certain Jews refusing to accept that Jesus acted for God through the power of the spirit but instead that he was an agent for evil. Those who will not accept Christ for what he is, the only way of salvation, spurn that way of salvation and thereby exclude themselves from that possible deliverance. When we read these verses carefully, we should notice that it says *"he is in danger of eternal damnation"* it does not say that he is eternally damned without any hope. It is the continuance in the lie and the rejection, that constitutes the unforgiven element of this inditement. This holds true in this world and in the world to come. The standards of divine judgment will not alter because Israel rejected their Messiah. The same standards of judgment expected by the Jews upon themselves will be exacted upon the gentiles. The God of the Old Testament has not changed His character nor his behaviours.

We need to proclaim this Truth and insist upon it in our preaching and in our outreach. The lie that the standards have been lessened or compromised because God now wants a different public relations profile is both wrong and absurd. God is not ashamed of the destruction of sinners at the time of the Noahic flood. Nor does He regret the destruction of wantonly evil people *"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."* Jude v 7.

This does not mean that God will instantly destroy anyone who is so foolish as to sin in any regard. Even Sodom had a preacher of righteousness sent to them, just Lot, who escaped with his life and only two of his many children, his wife foolishly regretting the decision to abandon the place of sin and looking back became compromised.

The rejection of hope is dangerous. *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for that city.”* Matthew 10v14,15. Many foolishly grade sins worse or less bad, this is wrong and foolhardy. According to this passage of scripture, to reject the testimony of the Apostles is worse than what was done in Sodom! We need to exercise care in any condemnation we might be tempted to pass upon others.

The lesson of God's dealing with His own people Israel is paramount. Romans 11v21 *“For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; But toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise, they also shall be cut off.”* God has preserved His harsh but just treatment of Israel as a divine record of the application of His standards in a real not in a theoretical situation.

Many say we should not judge at all. Jesus never taught that. Matthew 7v1,2 *“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”* What Jesus is actually saying is that we should be mindful of how we are to be judged. DO we wish to be judged by Jesus or shall we escape that judgment? Who are those that are not judged by him, but those that are not responsible to him those shall not be judged because they will not even be there before the Throne of Judgment!

It is how we judge others that is vital not that we sidestep the responsibility to judge and cope out of anything difficult because we just want to continue in sin that grace may abound! We need to judge others biblically! See James 2v13 *“For he shall have judgement without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; And mercy rejoices against judgement.”* The aspects of divine judgements are but one side of the divine character. God willing the second address will complete the picture for us to enable us to perceive the Almighty more clearly.

In the modern era the resurrection of the witnesses to gospel Truth has been evidenced. Their determining factor is seen in the declaration of the Altar community *“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments”*. Revelation 16v7

We need to be able to say **Amen** to that statement! Brethren and Sisters, friends let this be our watch cry!