



Quail In The Desert

Beware of what you ask for: Your desire could be your punishment.

Peter Dodd

Table Of Contents

Foreword	2
The People Demand a King.	4
Quail in the Desert	5
If That's What You Want, That's What You'll Get!	7
Give us Barabbas!	9
The Golden Calf.	11
Willful Ignorance: The State of Man.	13
Let's Hear It!	16
Truth Matters!	17
We Don't Learn From History	19
Choices Abound	20
Icons and Idols	22
Jesus or Barabbas?	25
Ask And It Shall Be Given	27
Teach Us To Pray...	29
Where Does This leave Us?	33



Website: Scriviner.co.uk

All scriptures quoted from NIV or ISV.

Foreword

In this article, I am doing something different. Instead of largely leaving the lessons and conclusions for the individual to make for themselves, I am laying it all out and making my own commentary and observations. For this reason, it is necessarily more blunt than usual for which I make no apologies, and a lot longer than normal which I do regret.

My target is not for the new Christian as much as those who may have been in the Faith a while and have begun to feel “comfortable” with their relationship with God. This is a good place to be, but it is also dangerous. “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” we are told, and it is a wise thing to remember that our loving Father is also most worthy of all honour and respect. The scandal of the Prodigal Son was not that he squandered his father’s money, but that after being disrespected by his son in such a way, the father welcomed his son back at all.

Peter Dodd.

January 2025

"But I want it!"

Proverbs 1:29-33 (International Standard Version)

- 29) "Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD;
30) they did not want my advice, and they rejected all my correction.
31) They will eat the fruit of their way, and they will be filled with their own devices.
32) Indeed, the waywardness of the naïve will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.
33) "But the person who listens to me will live safely and will be secure from the fear of evil."

Almost everyone with children knows what it is like to hear their children comparing themselves to other kids. For example, "Why can't we have cool clothes like them?" they ask. Perhaps it sits closer to home, with you wondering why you can't have nice things, have a good job, or be like other people.

Of course, anyone with smaller children knows that allowing them to have everything they want is dangerous. From dealing with the fall-out of eating an entire chocolate cake to playing with fire, a parent knows that limits and boundaries are set for a reason.

This doesn't make it easier for the children, who have little or no interest in safety, character building or learning the lessons of patience. The lessons of cause and effect and moderation more often come with growing maturity, but that can be of little comfort to the harassed mother enduring their two-year-old's "But I want it!" tantrum. I hesitate to ask how many parents or childminders have been tempted to throw the food or other object in their child's lap and say "If you want it that badly, here! Have it!" We can see this play out in another way too, when parents sometimes allow children to taste something they know they will not like, such as chili sauce etc to teach the child that sometimes, 'No' is there for a good reason. Sometimes, the parent really does know best.

If we are honest though, we may recognise ourselves in these scenarios. Not as the frustrated parent but as the petulant child. We can see this demonstrated in the early nation of Israel, the very people God had chosen for Himself to show the other nations of the earth how to properly live.

The People Demand a King.

In 1 Samuel 8, we see how the tribes of Israel, at that point a loose coalition of related tribes, grew tired of living with an invisible God as their head, and asked the prophet Samuel to appoint a king over them.

1 Samuel 8:5-7

5) They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

6) But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD.

7) And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king."

For several generations, even before the tribes of Israel finally entered the Promised Land, settled and populated it, they had recognised God as their king. Moses may well have led the Israelites out of Egypt, but he never claimed kingship; only that he regularly spoke directly with God and passed on His commands and instructions. At Sinai, God had told His people Israel that He had called them to be a kingdom of priests: a Holy Nation^[1]. Priests have a dual role- they ensure worship is carried out correctly, and they instruct the people on God's ways. This is what God had called Israel to be- a nation who would serve as an example for the other nations of the earth to follow. Israel was to show the world that they were to look first to God for their daily needs and in times of trouble. They were to trust that God would protect and provide for them. They had the law, written out by Moses, and an account of how God had dealt with them in the past to learn from and rely upon. They were to demonstrate their faith and trust in an invisible God who had already spoken, as the written historic accounts showed.

During the time of the Judges immediately prior to the events of 1 Samuel, God had provided the Judges: people who would judge the tribes fairly in accordance with God's law, and rally and lead the people to face danger when necessary. When attacked by a Midianite and Amalekite coalition army, God raised Gideon to leadership and guided him into victory over the enemy. In the book of Judges chapter 8, the people offered to make Gideon king, but he refused, reminding them that it was God who was to rule over them. But years later, when Samuel's sons were clearly not up to their priestly task, the people demanded of Samuel that he appoint a king in his place to rule them. "It is not you they have rejected but they have rejected Me as their king," God told him: "Listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

In 1 Samuel 8:10 onwards, Samuel gave God's reply: a king would conscript their children, seize their best lands for his friends, and impose taxes that would lead them to cry out for relief. Despite this warning, the people wanted a visible king to lead and fight for them instead of trusting in God^[2]. Later, during the reign of King Rehoboam, David's grandson, the people's burden led to rebellion, a brief civil war, and the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah.^[3]

Quail in the Desert

Their request must have stung in Samuel's ears. "Ok, but you'll be sorry" God was saying. Perhaps he was reminded of the account of when the people of Israel were wandering in the desert after being brought out of Egypt by God. Having first watched as God sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians, (Each outing in place one of the Egyptian gods) then seen the power of their own God as He parted the Red Sea so that they could escape, the people of Israel should have known that God would have provided for them in all situations. He appeared as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, confirming His continual presence among them. He provided water in the desert, and when they began to complain about their lack of food, He supplied them with manna, heavenly supplied bread, enough for each day.^[4] They had everything that they needed.

Yet, despite God's provision, in Numbers 11, we see how the people began to complain again, this time about the lack of variety. Stirred up by a small group of "hangers-on," [5] the people started remembering the food they had in Egypt, while conveniently forgetting the hardships they endured while there. God answered them, but not in the way they were expecting.

Numbers 11:18-20

18) "Tell the people: 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The LORD heard you when you wailed, "If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it.

19) *You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days,*

20) *but for a whole month--until it comes out of your nostrils, and you loathe it--because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"*"

31) Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction.

32) All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp.

33) But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague.

34) Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

(Empasis added)

If That's What You Want, That's What You'll Get!

“If that’s what you want, that’s what you’ll get!” God effectively said. And it was understandable. Up to that point, God had protected, looked after and guided the people. They had been divinely provided with food, and enough of it. But it seems they were just not grateful for what they had. Instead of thanking God for the miraculous provision He was giving them, they longed for the melons and cucumbers, the garlic and herbs they had while still in captivity. They were in danger of selling out their God-given freedom for food. This was perilously close to the sin Esau committed by selling his birthright for a pot of stew.^[6] In Old Testament times, the birthright was a double portion of the wealth and goods inherited by the eldest on his father’s death, as he would become responsible for providing and protecting the family from that point on. He also took on the role and responsibilities of making decisions for and interceding with God on his family’s behalf—effectively acting as priest and king. Esau disrespected and did not take his right as firstborn seriously, considering that the pleasure of a single meal was worth more than the inheritance his father Isaac had accrued for him, and the honour of becoming the family patriarch.

The similarities between the nation of Israel and Esau are interesting. As the firstborn, Esau should have honoured his father and served as leader and priest to his family. In Exodus 4, God refers to Israel as His “Firstborn Son.” Later, at Sinai, God told them that if they obey Him and keep His commandments, then He would make them His treasured possession out of all the nations^[7]. “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” He said. Their inheritance would be the land that God had promised their ancestor, Abraham many generations before^[8]. We have already seen how Israel was intended to be the example for the other nations to follow. Would they now squander their inheritance and rights for a meal?

Almost. God made His dissatisfaction known when he sent a plague upon the people, and many died. Numbers 11:34 says, “Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.” Place names are often given as reminders of the events that happened there. As it happens, Kibroth Hattaavah means, “Graves of the Greedy,” or “Graves of Lust;” a stark warning to those who consider that what they have is not enough.

Psalms 81:10-12

10) I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

11) "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me.

12) So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

Keep verse 12 in mind as we consider the implications of not submitting to God.

Give us Barabbas!

We must recognize however that two happenings are not a necessarily a pattern, especially in Biblical interpretation. So, do we see it elsewhere where it could demonstrate a pattern? Do we see this happening in the New Testament? We see this most obviously at the trial of Jesus in front of Pontius Pilate. Luke records Pilate stating that he found no basis for the charges that the crowd brought against Jesus. In Matthew’s account, Pilate asked them, “Why? What crime has he committed?” but they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!”^[9]

Matthew 27:24-26

24) When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

25) All the people answered, "*Let his blood be on us and on our children!*"

26) Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

(Emphasis added)

Forty years later, their request came true. One generation later, their constant rebellions against Roman rule resulted in a massive backlash against them, and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed for a second time in 70AD. Just as Nebuchadnezzar had done many generations before, the Romans slaughtered thousands, tore down the temple, the most precious symbol in Jewish eyes, and forcibly took untold thousands of ordinary people into slavery throughout the Roman world. The crowds and their children had indeed received the consequences of their actions.

It may be tempting to think that for this reason, God has cursed or “holds a grudge” against the Jews, and over the years, many have. But nothing could be further from the truth^[10]. God merely held them to their word. I ask you to place yourself in that situation, within that historical and cultural context, and with a Jewish upbringing. Here was a man who could feed thousands with five loaves and two fishes; could heal diseases and raise the dead; who threatened the established status quo. Yet despite His miraculous abilities, He seemed more interested in morality than politics; their relationship with God over their relationship with Caesar.^[11] He was already seen as a threat to Roman rule.

As far as the Pharisees were concerned, if He did become political, he could raise an army. “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place (Temple) and our nation” they reasoned. “It is better for one man to die than the whole nation^[12].” Faced with such circumstances, would you choose any different in that crowd? Confronted with disappointment and letdown, would you not also pour out your frustration and anger upon the One who had shown so much promise?

The Golden Calf.

Obviously, few in Jerusalem that day realized that what they were doing was actually part of God's Plan from the beginning. But there were some who recalled the prophecies surrounding His birth, and the fact that their Messiah must suffer and die to achieve His aims. Jesus Himself had said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."^[13] By this He meant that it was all written in the Old Testament already; they just had to read it and recognize it. But understanding the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament was in its infancy at that time. It was people like the disciples who had learned from Jesus to tie up prophecies with their fulfilments in their own lifetimes, who started seeing the patterns. Others learned from them, such as the first martyr, Stephen, who pointed out that God would sometimes take His hands off their lives so that others could learn from their mistakes. Brought before the Sanhedrin (Ruling Council), he reminded them once more of an event from Israel's wanderings in the desert.

Acts 7:39-41

39) "But our fathers refused to obey [Moses]. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

40) They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt--we don't know what has happened to him!'

41) That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honour of what their hands had made.

Stephen was recounting the story of the Golden Calf, the idol they created while Moses was on Mount Sinai at Horeb. Significantly, while they had initially been terrified of God on the mountain^[14], they now cast an idol of the Egyptian god, Apis, who served as an intermediary between the gods and man^[15]- the role that Moses was performing for them at that very moment.

How quickly they had forgotten that one of the plagues God brought against the Egyptians was the death of their cattle – a deliberate snub to Apis. “They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass.” The psalmist wrote in Psalm 106, “They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt.” Like Israel requesting from Samuel a king they could see many generations later, here Israel rejected Moses while he was still up on the mountain, and looked instead to a god and intermediary they could see, never knowing that the two would one day be combined in the person of Jesus.

Alluding to this, Stephen went on to remind the Sanhedrin of the words of the prophet Amos written to the later Kingdom of Israel.^[16]

Acts 7:42-43

42) But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies.

This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets: "'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?

43) You have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile' beyond Babylon.

Stephen pointed out to them that God was effectively saying that He had turned Israel over to the consequences of their actions. In the absence of Moses, God’s spokesman, Israel had elected to appeal to Apis, a false intermediary between God and man. Just as they rejected Moses, they rejected Jesus. Given that Paul says that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,^[17] it can be seen why God could not let this go without severe consequence. Jesus is the intermediary, and they would bear the consequence of rejecting Him, just as Israel went into captivity in Babylon where Moloch and Rephan were the principal deities. Similarly, just as Israel went into captivity, those who reject God’s intermediary and look to other forms of salvation, provision or protection instead of trusting God will be taken away to spend their eternity away from Him, just as they desire.

Willful Ignorance: The State of Man.

But would we be any different? Would we recognize when God was trying to speak to us? Paul's letter to the church in Rome (Several years before the destruction of Jerusalem) is characteristically blunt. Not known for taking his time to get to the point in his letters, Paul launches into a commentary on what he saw as the state of contemporary mankind, starting at verse 18. Things have not changed.

Romans 1:18-19

18) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

19) since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

Paul's message is that what may be known about God, the evidence for His existence is obvious to those who will accept it. But there are godless and wicked people who by their actions make light of the truth God has revealed, and dare I add, sometimes deliberately.

Romans 1:20-23

20) For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

21) For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22) Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Paul's point is that the fact of God's existence, and many of His attributes and qualities are obvious to those who will look for them, but mankind has instead turned to worship representations of God, or images of created beings, rather than the Creator himself. Much like Israel and the Golden Calf at Sinai....

Romans 1:24-25

24) Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25) They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

Perhaps Paul had some of the Roman Mystery Religions in mind, with their temple prostitutes and fertility rites. But it is more likely he was referencing the world in general, in particular the attitude of today's world: "If it feels good, do it!"

"Because of this," he wrote in the next verse, "God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones." "Men committed indecent acts with other men," he continued, "and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

This is a clear example of God allowing men to do what they want, with the result that they corrupt themselves totally. Paul's phrase, "gave them over" (Paradidomi in Greek) was sometimes used in a legal sense, such as when a court bailiff handed over a convicted prisoner to the prison guard. "If that is what you want," God has said, "That is what you can have." But there are always consequences though, physical and spiritual. Physically, Paul wrote in verse 27, they received in themselves the penalty for their perversion--sexually transmitted infections were rife throughout the Roman world. Spiritually, Paul explained the result starting in verse 28: They would not only cross the line but enjoy the journey.

Romans 1:28-31

28) Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

29) They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,

30) slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

31) they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Let's Hear It!

Again I ask, are we as a people so different today? Verse 28 says people did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. This implies that at one point they had the knowledge of God, but as verse 25 says, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. A deliberate choice. At Horeb, Israel chose Apis, a false god over the mediator God had already given. An imitation of the real thing.

“Preach the Word,” Paul wrote in the second letter to Timothy, chapter 4, “Correct, rebuke and encourage, with great patience and careful instruction.”

2 Timothy 4:3-4

3) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

4) They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

“Men will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” Offended by the truth, they will gather false intermediaries that will scratch their particular itches; make them feel better about themselves. They will turn aside to things created in the image they prefer. Wanting to feel better without changing themselves, they will choose the false over the good. A harsh reality, which is why Paul instructed Timothy to be prepared always to correct, rebuke and encourage- with patience and careful instruction. Paul’s concern was not to simply be right for the sake of being right. To him, Truth mattered. Even Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “... A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”^[18]

Those who come to Him must be prepared to come to Him on His terms: Willing to come to God accepting the reality of their situation, and with the correct attitude. Similarly, God gave strict instructions in the formulative “wilderness wanderings” how the sacrifices were to be handled. Those who came without proper preparation or wrong attitudes could expect consequences. The sons of Aaron, Israel’s priest, were killed by God when they attempted to offer incense to Him with “unauthorized fire,” – fire not taken from the altar of God^[19]. The priests and the people had just consecrated themselves to God. Perhaps Aaron’s sons thought that this gave them license to make the sacrifice their way and to take shortcuts. God is merciful, but he does not abide arrogance, pride or self-importance, no matter a person’s rank or title. Even their earlier experience with Moses up the mountain at Sinai did not save them^[20].

The point is that a persons’ rank or title is no guarantee that they are following God. Samuel’s sons disqualified themselves from further service by their actions and attitude^[21]. Aaron’s sons had been called by God Himself, but they did not take His commands seriously. Jesus predicted that many would call out to Him saying, “did we not prophesy in Your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Reputation and fame are no guarantees either.

Truth Matters!

The Apostle Paul warned the Thessalonian church that there would be deception in the Last Days. This deception would be primarily aimed at those who choose to abandon Truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

- 9) The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,
- 10) and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
- 11) For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie
- 12) and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth^[22] but have delighted in wickedness.

Again, note the reason they perish in verse 10. Truth matters. It should always be truth that informs our choices. It should be grasped and held on to, even in the absence of emotional attachment. But because they choose not to yield to truth, God provides people with something they can follow into judgement. Just like Pharoah at the beginning of the Exodus account: “Let My People Go!” God commanded him, but he chose not to listen. When he demanded proof that Moses and Aaron spoke for God, Aaron threw down his staff at Pharoah’s feet, and it became a snake. Pharoah’s magicians were able to duplicate this through their magic arts, but were shocked when Aaron’s snake ate theirs^[23]. He “hardened his heart,” we are told. But the next time we hear this phrase, it is God who hardened his heart even further, cementing the decision Pharoah had made.^[24] God was about to use Pharoah as an example to Israel so that they could learn from Him. The punishment on Egypt brought through the plagues was part of God’s Plan, but was brought about by Pharoah’s choice.

We Don’t Learn From History

As we are constantly taught, if we learn anything from history, it is that we don't learn from history! In time, those tribes wandering in the desert united under a king that God did give them. Saul, their first king, was rejected by God because he did not listen to God's instruction. He tried to offer a sacrifice to God himself instead of waiting for Samuel the priest to arrive^[25]. He had attempted to make the sacrifice on his own terms, with wrong motives. God took the kingdom from him and awarded it to another; one who would wholeheartedly follow God. That man was to be King David, "a man after God's own heart."

Historically, the pattern was well underway. Just as the time of the Judges was a cycle of being rescued by God, then doing what they wanted again, the reigns of the various kings through the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah followed a similar pattern, with the kings (with some exceptions) in turn slowly becoming more and more despotic and autocratic. Wanting to rule on their own terms, with little regard to the laws God had put in place for them to rule by, and with ruling officials similarly only concerned with enriching themselves, just like Samuel's sons. God eventually took a step back to show both of His kingdoms, Israel and Judah, what would happen when they did try to rule and live without Him. The nations were invaded, cities destroyed, and the people taken into captivity in Assyria and Babylon where they would re-learn humility and reliance upon God while being subject to other rulers.

It is tempting to recollect the image of the frustrated mother throwing food or other object in their tantrum-throwing toddler's lap in frustration, but it is clear that we really do get what we ask for.

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done" and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self-choice, there would be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock, it is opened.
(C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis signature Classics, p106)

The joy that Lewis speaks of above is an eternity of life with God. It was the missionary martyr, Jim Elliot who said, “He is no fool who gives the thing he cannot keep to gain the thing he cannot lose.” Compared to an eternity with God, choosing to abandon short-term pleasure is a small thing. Seeking out the Truth and acting on it, despite the inevitable ridicule and scorn from those who mock will surely result in God’s approval and praise. “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”^[26]

So now we stop and look back at what we have learned. Firstly, we see that God uses patterns in history for us to learn from. If we can recognise the pattern, we can learn the lesson. In Genesis, God told the man, “...But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” Later, when tempted by Satan in the form of a snake, we are told,

Genesis 3:6

6) When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

The woman desired “The Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and she and the man who was with her chose to disobey God rather than trust His instruction. Don’t blame this on Eve: She wasn’t there when God told Adam not to eat it. Adam should have stopped her, but he simply chose to follow Eve rather than God, even knowing what God had told him.^[27] They had both placed their own choices first, rather than listen to God. From that time on, we, the descendants of that first man and woman have had to live with the consequences of their choices and are therefore intimately acquainted with the knowledge of what evil looks like. Just watch the news or read a newspaper for details. Yes, we can see the good in people but let’s not ever be tempted to think that the good we see is capable of balancing out the evil, especially in our own hearts. The good merely contrasts and highlights the extent of the evil. Mankind desired the knowledge of good and evil; they got it.

Choices Abound

At the beginning of Israel's exodus from Egypt, Pharaoh made a choice not to listen to God's command. He hardened his heart. God respected that choice by hardening his heart further. Egypt were to reap the consequences shortly after. Pharaoh refused to let God's people, God's "Firstborn" go; Egypt lost their firstborn in the last of the plagues. The lesson is plain for those who understand what they should or should not do but choose their own way out of stubborn pride. If that is you, consider that the time might come when you feel locked into your decision with no way out. Humility and repentance are your only way out.

When the Israelites passed through the Red Sea and began their wanderings in the wilderness, they made a choice to listen to the rabble or mixed multitude complaining about the food rather than speak directly to God about it. They chose to ignore the hardships they faced while they had variety in their food and complained with ingratitude about what they did have. God's reply defined the pattern that was to come: If that's what you want, that's what you'll get until it comes out your nostrils... Here is a lesson that we could all learn from. As Christians, we have been redeemed from a life of slavery to sin with all its consequences, by God at the cost of His own Son, Jesus. We know we have His protection throughout life, and that He will provide for our needs. But sometimes we remember only the benefits associated with our life in slavery- the garlic, the cucumbers, the leeks and cumin compare well when we remember the things we might have made through questionable means, improper relationships, or ill-gotten reputations. Let's not be tempted to separate the fact that those things came from a life without Christ. There are many who think that we possibly should have "things" in our lives as well as Salvation from God. But these "things" are mostly a means to an end: Our own pleasure and gratification.

Much like Esau and his pot of stew, we may be in danger of losing our inheritance. Like Israel in the desert, instead of thanking God for the Salvation and the provision He has given, we may be tempted to complain about what we do not have. We take Him for granted and begin to believe that our Salvation and its benefits are our right, and not a gift. As a child of God, we obviously do have a right to take our wants and desires to Him, and God delights to provide when it is right to do so. But complaining you do not have something without having first asked is wrong. And complaining that an All-Knowing, Sovereign God has said 'No' surely elevates one's own self above that of the All-knowing, Sovereign God. It should be noted that when Israel did complain, God did provide them with quail as meat. And lots of it. More than they needed or indeed wanted until it was "running out their noses," i.e. they were sick of it. But there is no record in the account in Numbers 11 of any thanks or indication of gratitude. Despite having the opportunity to give thanks, it seems the people simply accepted the gift of the quail as their right. No wonder God sent a plague upon them. Perhaps we should re-evaluate our own lives and give sincere thanks for what we have been given.

Icons and Idols

For Israel, the defining moment came when they requested a king. God showed that the results would be harsh, but they insisted. They made a choice for a king instead of God. They could be under no illusions of what was to come. God specifically told Samuel to tell the people what the king would be like, but still, they insisted. They wanted a visible figurehead- someone to lead them in battle. And so, God gave them a king. And it was a king's pride and greed that eventually split the kingdom by forcing them to do more work than ever before.

Like the quail in the desert, they got what they wanted until they were sick of it. Perhaps we too should be careful of what we ask for, particularly when it comes to our leaders. Idols or icons were originally physical representations of an invisible god, but inevitably ended up becoming a substitute for that god. The idol becomes more than a representation, it more often than not becomes seen as a god in its' own right. In the same way, leaders can be lifted up and put upon a pedestal.

“Follow my example as I follow Christ,” Paul said to Timothy,^[28] but many leaders within the Church instead claim loyalty and obedience as their right. Instead of ruling on God’s behalf like a shepherd for the flock’s Owner, they usurp the responsibility, and rule for their own purposes. How many churches have split because of a leader’s greed or pride? But we as individuals must take responsibility too. Just like Israel, many people find the responsibility of a relationship with an invisible God too difficult, and desire someone to lead, instruct and guide them. Perhaps even fight their battles for them. Take responsibility for them. Perhaps even usurp the role of Jesus, our Shepherd. If that is what we desire, we must face the potential consequence of a relationship with God defined by externally imposed rules, regulations, and expectations. And maybe even the possibility of following a false shepherd.

Throughout Israel and Judah’s respective histories, God sent them warnings through the prophets: If they ignored His commands and ruled unjustly, there would be consequences. If they honoured God and ruled with justice, then God would guide them, provide for them and protect them. “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets,” God said through the prophet Amos^[29]. For several generations, and through the reigns of several different kings, God warned them repeatedly through the prophets. But much like a driver cursing a red dashboard light instead of addressing the problem that it is indicating, the rulers cursed the prophets instead of addressing the problems the prophets highlighted. They insisted on ruling on their own terms without reference to God’s laws, acknowledging Him in ritual and ceremony only. The officials refused to act with mercy and justice, and the people followed other gods. So, if they did not want Him as their God, He would take His hand off them, and they would face the inevitable consequences of invasion and captivity. But this was not a case of God abandoning them. It was a chance for later generations to learn from their mistakes. Their sufferings were self-inflicted; They had no-one else to blame. As God reminded Israel on their return from exile,

Hosea 13:9-11

9) "You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper.

10) Where is your king, that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns, of whom you said, "Give me a king and princes'?

11) So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away.

Yet when the time was right, while still in captivity, they acknowledged their sin and God brought about their release,^[30] as they said in Zechariah chapter 1: "As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us."

Today, those who are in similar positions of leadership face the same choice as the young King Josiah. When a copy of God's written Law was found in the temple, he tore his robes as a sign of anguish and repentance that God's Law had not been followed. He then immediately instituted a system of reform to return his people to God. God's response was that the historic sin of the people was too great to leave unpunished, but Josiah's attitude of repentance had ensured that he himself would be buried in peace, and the judgement would not come in his lifetime^[31]. From this, we learn that how to lead and conduct our lives and those in our care is also a choice, and that God honours those choices. When the kings, nobles and people refused to listen to God and follow His ways, they slid ever nearer to inevitable judgement and captivity in Babylon. When the kings did listen and reformed their ways, the judgement was postponed, but not cancelled. And it is worth noting that even the evil Assyrian empire's judgement was postponed when the king heeded the message brought by a reluctant Jonah^[32].

Jesus or Barabbas?

God's people Israel did become an example for others to learn from in many ways. But as well as learning from the nations or kings, perhaps we should look at the people themselves and wonder if we would do any different when presented with a choice between Jesus, the Saviour and Messiah, and Barabbas, a rebel and a murderer. They chose Barabbas^[33] at the cost of their own and their children's lives. They wanted rebellion and murder; they got it with the destruction of Jerusalem.

We too have a similar choice: Live for Jesus, the Saviour, or live on our own terms and face the death that results from it. The Apostle Paul forces us to face that reality: God's creation displays the work of its Creator, if we choose to see it. Logic insists that for there to be a creation, there must be a Creator, yet many choose to ignore this^[34]. It is a choice. Those who ignore or deny reality because it is inconvenient find themselves in the same position as those in the Old Testament who made wooden idols- useless images that they themselves had created. Much like Israel choosing a fallible but visible king instead of an all-powerful invisible God. An idol may be useless, but it is a common alternative to living God's way. If that is the way we chose to relate to God, then He will respect our choice and not impose Himself upon us. We will face the consequences physically, environmentally and spiritually just as the people of Israel and Judah found when they abandoned God and found themselves in captivity in Babylon. We, however, find ourselves dealing with the consequences of our actions, be it jail, hospital or our broken lives. We live in a polluted world adding to our problems daily, and we refuse to do the right thing. Cults, influencers and personalities feed our self-obsessions and lead us away from God. Only humility and repentance will get us out of this.

This situation follows us into the Church. There are times when like the people of Israel, a leader may do something wrong. As we saw, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that even miracles and signs are not a sign of God's approval, but as he wrote to the Corinthian church, faithfulness to the truth will eventually demonstrate who does have God's approval^[35]. For those who desire an excuse to go another direction, a "delusion" will be provided. Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate Aaron's staff becoming a snake, implying that their gods were equal to the God of Aaron and Moses, therefore validating Pharaoh's choice. But they were shocked when Aaron's snake ate theirs, definitively denying that claim. But Pharaoh hardened his heart anyway- his mind was already made up. As we saw earlier, those who do not love the truth and deliberately choose the wrong path into evil, a delusion will appear for them to justify their choice. Yet they remain without excuse, because they knowingly chose the wrong path.

The crowds in Jerusalem, hardly contemplated Pilates' offer: Jesus or Barabbas. One path to freedom would be slow and rely upon the actions of an invisible God who asked them to first confront their own hearts and change their own ways. The other path was represented by the direct action of a rebel who had murdered in the name of freedom from Rome. They wanted autonomy - the freedom to run their own affairs. Do we trust that God is in control of our lives and plans, or do we try to take direct action by acting on our own terms? It didn't end well for the citizens of Jerusalem; we can't expect much difference.

Ask And It Shall Be Given

The Gospel of Luke tells us in chapter 11 that one day Jesus was praying, and one of His disciples asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." The result was what we call The Lord's Prayer, a God-given example for us to follow. Immediately after this, however, Jesus went on to teach them through parables how to ask of God properly. We are familiar with his instructions, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you," but Jesus also went on,

Luke 11:10-13

10) For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

11) "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

12) Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

13) If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

There is a lesson here that is sometimes not immediately obvious. In the example Jesus gave, the son asked for a fish – good food to a first century peasant. The father would not offer a snake, the symbol of pain, death and deception. An egg was also good food but symbolized new life. A scorpion brought pain and suffering.

Digging slightly further, historically, we know that the symbol of a fish was associated with the early Christians, while a snake was always associated with Satan. But instead of focusing on what the son was not getting, perhaps we should consider what he was asking for? Life and sustenance from his father! They were not frivolous things such as the Prodigal Son envisioned in another parable. Don't Just as the Apostle James said in his letter, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."^[36]" We should not be tempted to seek God because of what he can give us; We should seek Him because of who He is.

Paul's letter to the Ephesian church gives us much to consider. On this topic, he wrote to the new Christians there,

Ephesians 4:17-20

17) So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

18) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

19) Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

20) You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.

Drawing from similar imagery that he used when writing to the Romans, he insists that they change from their old selfish lives, insensitive to both the goodness of God and the dangers their way of life and hardened hearts will bring. He goes on, however to explain the idea behind the Greek word, *Metanoio*.

Ephesians 4:21-24

21) Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

22) You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

23) to be made new in the attitude of your minds;

24) and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

For those of us who don't speak Greek, 'Metanoio' is a word most often translated Repent. More than simply being sorry for doing something, it is an active verb, more fully containing the idea of a complete change of mind. "Put off the old self," Paul wrote, "Be made new in the attitude of your minds, and put on the new self..." It is the change of mind that brings about a change in both attitude and actions. Wanting to do something is far more effective than having rules imposed on one's self, and wanting to please God is the purest of motivations.

Teach Us To Pray...

Prayer is something we often take for granted. The pagan gods of the Old Testament times needed to be appeased with gifts and sacrifices. Yet the God of the bible provided the only acceptable sacrifice himself in the person of His son, Jesus. For this reason, we are told that we can have confidence in approaching God. "If we ask anything according to His will," we are told in 1 John 5:14, "He hears us." But we cannot ignore the fact that what we ask must be in accordance with His sovereign will. Sovereignty means that he is free to act as He sees fit, and answers to no-one. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these 'things' will be added to you," Jesus taught in Matthew chapter 6 verse 33. If the 'things' we are seeking are for the sake of God's kingdom, and we are seeking the righteousness that He provides, He will naturally give us all the 'things' we need to sustain us, just like the Israelites in the wilderness.

“Don’t go on babbling like the Pagans,” Jesus taught, when asked about prayer in Matthew’s Gospel.^[37] “They think that they will be heard because of their many words. Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” Insincere flattery is not the same as praise. Using certain rituals, words, phrases or incantations is not relationship; it is manipulation. “He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.” King David wrote in Psalm 22.

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full,” Jesus taught His disciples. If they want everyone to see them, then everyone has indeed seen them, and seen them for what they are. Their works and words certainly do not display their righteousness.

“This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..."

The Lord’s Prayer starts by reminding us that we do not stand alone in God’s presence. There is no place for selfishness in the holy family that is His kingdom.

“[May] Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.”

We acknowledge that God’s will is always done in Heaven, and desire that His coming kingdom will make it so on earth too. But until then, we look forward to that time, praying and interceding humbly that God will provide and intercede for us, our family, friends and colleagues, just as if His kingdom were already established here on earth. We do not by our actions pray it into being; this is something God Himself will do^[38]. Again, we remind ourselves that He is sovereign, and He will build it Himself, step by step, in His own time. “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field^[39]”

“Give us today our daily bread.”

Here is what the Israelites in the wilderness took for granted. God had determined to take His people out of Egypt and into the land He promised them. There was nothing or no-one that could stop God accomplishing His plan. There is no way that He would take them into the desert to starve. Of course He would provide, and provide all that they needed.

“During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet” God reminded them at Moab.^[40] Yet they were still stirred up to complain about what they did not have. Sometimes going through hardships shows us our own hearts. The memory of the leeks and garlic outweighed the Israelites desire to press on into God’s Promised land. Are the ‘things’ that we desire worth more to us than God’s Salvation?

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

In order to have debts forgiven, it is necessary to first acknowledge them. This too is the essence of repentance: To change our minds and see things as God does. When we understand that God does not measure the amount of sin in our lives, but rather the mere existence of it, we are forced to change our lives and to appreciate His mercy even more.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness,” John tells us in his first epistle.^[41] But this also demand that we acknowledge that our debt to a just and holy God far outweighs any debt due to us. Since it is the same Just and Merciful God who forgives both us and our neighbour, we have no right to make unreasonable demands of them that we cannot keep ourselves. There is a requirement that we recognise God’s mercy and forgiveness in others too:

“Forgive us our sins, just as we forgive others” is a sobering prayer. It is not our place to demand that God take vengeance or retribution upon others, knowing that we would be worthy of the same punishment.

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”

It is a humble request for safety in the presence of Satan, acknowledging that not all of Satan's ploys require physical violence or peril. Satan's greatest work is in bring deception that will lead us away from God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to remind us of what God has taught us, that we may counter Satan's lies. But it is also a humble petition that God would help us not to get into positions or situations where we can be tempted. And here is the rub:

James 1:13-14

13) When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

14) but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Do we see that we are tempted by our own evil desires? This is a call for us to honestly examine our own motives when we pray. Perhaps we should always ask ourselves, “In what way will my request benefit the Kingdom of God?” even if it is just to clarify it in our own minds^[42]. Perhaps this is one reason we are taught to first seek consensus on what to pray for.^[43] It is our own desires that trap and snare us; our own desires that lead to God removing His protective hand from us or harshly reminding us that he knows best, despite our insistence.

Where Does This leave Us?

So, this brings us back to the question asked by Jesus' disciples: How then should we pray? What should we be asking for?

There is no fast rule here; we all have different circumstances and situations. But the essence is to consider what it is we are asking for when we pray- Is it for God's kingdom, or for our own gratification? Is it necessary on our journey through life, or does it fulfil the role of the garlic, leeks and cucumbers in Egypt? Are we prepared to accept that when God has given us direction, it is actually for our best? If God says no, do we insist?

We have looked at some of the instances where Israel got what they wanted, and the consequences they received.

Adam and Eve desired the knowledge of good and evil. We, their descendants live our lives in that knowledge.

The people of Israel wanted food in the desert; they got it until they were sick of it.

The people of Israel wanted a king; they got a king who worked them so hard they rebelled against him and split the kingdom.

Israel and Judah both wanted to run their own kingdoms without reference to God's laws. The people drifted so far from God that God withdrew His protection; They were both conquered by pagan nations and carried away into captivity where they could live without Him if they chose. Most, but not all repented and returned.

The people of Jerusalem chose Barabbas over Jesus, the Giver of Life. They got death and destruction as their reward.

We are faced with many of the same choices in different disguises. As Paul wrote to the Romans, if people want an excuse to ignore or disobey something, then God will allow them something to justify their decision, just as Pharoah found out, and as we too will find out if we are looking for something to substitute for God in our lives.

But more than that, we need to recognise that in all of the choices that we have seen, the choice was made for the things that represented personal or short-term gratification over God's will for that situation. Just as John wrote in his letter,

1 John 2:16 (International Standard Version)

16) For everything that is in the world—the desire for fleshly gratification, the desire for possessions, and worldly arrogance—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Ultimately, these have all been learning experiences for us. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians reminding them of their forefathers' failures, these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.^[44] In every case where men have demanded their own way over God's Plan, and have been given it, things ended badly. Surely, we should learn from this. Instead, we are to delight ourselves in the Lord, and he will give us the desires of our hearts. Short-term gratification is indeed just that: short term. It can never outweigh the benefits that God intended for those who yield to Him in this life.

Everyone, regardless of circumstance or situation, is faced with times where they must make a similar decision. You are faced with a choice of following God's commands or choosing your own way; Honoring God or honoring yourself. God respects these choices, but there is one final choice, and the consequence we must briefly look at.

In Genesis 22, the passage dealing with the binding of Isaac, Abraham is told to take his son, "His only son" and sacrifice him on a mountain. Abraham was faced with a heart-rending choice- disobey God or kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the very God who had foretold and enabled Isaac's birth. It didn't make any sense, yet Abraham listened to God, and on arrival at the mountain, bound his son and placed him upon the altar he had prepared there. His hand was stopped as he reached out to pick up the knife. This was obedience that the Lord truly honoured.

Genesis 22:16-18

16) ... "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17) I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

18) and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son meant that he became the father of multitudes, just as God promised when He changed his name from Abram^[45]. This must make us consider the cost of any sacrifice we are asked to make for God. Is the thing we are sacrificing worth the blessing we may receive in return? For Abraham, although he did not know it, the sacrifice and the reward were the same thing. Through Isaac came Abraham's grandchildren, Esau and Jacob. Jacob became the patriarch of Abraham's line when Esau traded it for a bowl of stew, as we have seen. But Jacob was to have an encounter with God that led to God renaming him Israel. The people descended from his twelve sons became known as the Children of Israel, and eventually, just Israel. If Abraham had not chosen to obey the voice of God, the history of God's dealings with mankind may have been very different. But Abraham was not to know this- he could only accept this in faith.

We are little different. Abraham's choice was difficult, but it yielded unimaginable results when we consider that his initial desire was for an heir.^[46] Likewise with many of the things God asks us to do, we may never see the results of in this lifetime. But sometimes God does allow us to see the results of His blessing, such as when Caleb, together with Joshua refused to accept that God had taken the Children of Israel through the Wilderness only to allow them to perish when they tried to enter the Promised Land the first time.

Quail In The Desert

Of the twelve spies who scouted the Promised Land, only Joshua and Caleb based their faith upon what God had already done, knowing that He would not abandon them at this point. The people, scared by the reports of the other ten spies, did not want to fight the giants they had seen in the land. God made it so they did not have to. Their lack of trust led to Israel spending another 40 years learning trust and faith until they could return a generation later, with Joshua leading them this time. Even in later life, Caleb followed the Lord wholeheartedly, so was given the city of Hebron as his inheritance^[47], the city in which the patriarchs were buried, and from where King David was to rule at the beginning of his reign.^[48]

So ultimately, we too are faced with choices. Will we continue to ask for things that temporarily gratify us, things that have no value in God's kingdom, things that feed our pride and arrogance? If that is what we desire above God's leading and provision, then perhaps we should be aware that God may supply it to us so that we may learn that its value is nothing compared to what he could provide for us if we follow His will. When we do follow His will, He provides all that we need to accomplish His will.



1. Exodus 19:5-6 ↑
2. 1 Samuel 8:20 ↑
3. 1Kings 12. ↑
4. Exodus 16. ↑
5. Numbers 11:4; Exodus 12:38. Generally thought to apply to other slaves of differing ancestry, and Egyptians who had intermarried with Israelites. ↑
6. Genesis 25:29-34 ↑
7. Exodus 19 ↑
8. Leviticus 20:24. ↑
9. Luke 23:22, Matthew 27, 24-26 ↑
10. Romans 11:1 ↑
11. Matthew 22:15-22 ↑
12. John 11:47-53 ↑
13. Matthew 11:9-15 ↑
14. Hebrews 12:18-21 ↑
15. A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians: Volume 1: John Gardner Wilkinson. 1871. ↑
16. Amos 5: 25-27 ↑
17. 1 Timothy 2:5 ↑
18. John 4: 23-24 ↑
19. Leviticus 9:24 through to 10:2. ↑
20. Exodus 24:9-11 ↑
21. 1 Samuel 8:3 ↑
22. “Believed” - a complete reliance upon, not just a mental assent. ↑
23. Exodus 7:9-13 ↑
24. Pun unintended. See Exodus 8:15, and verse 32, and compare chapter 9:12. ↑
25. 1 Samuel 13:8-14 ↑
26. Mark 8:36 ↑
27. Tangentially, another pattern: Adam chose Eve over God, Ahab chose Jezebel over God, (1Kings 21:25) and Ananias chose Sapphira over God (Acts 5:1 – 11). ↑
28. 1 Corinthians 11:1 ↑
29. Amos 3:6-7 ↑
30. See Daniel 9:1-19. Note: Daniel was descended from Judah’s royalty or nobility, (Chap1:3,6) thus had the authority to speak on behalf of his fellow captive Jews. ↑
31. 2 Kings 22:14-20 ↑
32. Jonah chapter 3. ↑

33. Luke 23:24-25 ↑

34. If the “Big Bang” was the mechanism for God’s creation, it still required a First Cause. I refer you to the Kalam Argument by William Lane Craig.

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/science-theology/the-scientific-kalam-cosmological-argument> ↑

35. 1 Corinthians 11:19 ↑

36. James 4:3. ↑

37. Matthew 6. ↑

38. Matthew 16:18 ↑

39. Matthew 9:38 ↑

40. Deuteronomy 29:5 ↑

41. 1John 1:9 ↑

42. See also 1 John 2:16-17 ↑

43. Matthew 18:19 ↑

44. 1Corinthians 10, especially verse 6 ↑

45. Genesis 17:5-6 ↑

46. Genesis 15:1-6 ↑

47. Joshua 14:6-14 ↑

48. 2Samuel 5:3-5 ↑