

THE LOVE AND COMPASSION OF GOD

BY WENDY BURNFIELD

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**I dedicate this journal to my beloved
family. David, Taylor and Kyle.**

**To my Lord and Savior, who has
never forsaken me.**

Introduction

Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave
you.

Ephesians 4:32 (HCSB)

For most of my years as a Christian, I believed that I was infallible in my interpretation of scripture and if you had a different interpretation, you must not understand how

‘clear’ the bible was about the evidence. I saw how unkind and cruel my beliefs had transformed my nature. This was a product of the God I viewed, which lacked kindness, compassion and allowed suffering for all eternity.

The worst hell is to have no hope towards a better future! I am committed to believe that God is kind, and does not lack compassion even for the most wicked human being. There was a time that I thought otherwise and believed God was justified to allow fallible human beings to suffer forever. However, I am thankful to God for opening my eyes to *His unlimited and amazing Grace!*

We often forget the kindness and compassion of God. In our cultural traditions, the focus is mainly on God's judgment and wrath. The purpose of this journal is to reflect and document 23 years of faith in Jesus Christ and why I came to conclude that His *redemptive act will save everyone*.

In 1988 I became born again and was baptized at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas. I was convinced by scripture that hell was without end, and anyone who rejected the Gospel message would go to 'hell' for all eternity but in 2009 a series of events lead me to question my views.

I was watching a commercial about how rare kindness was in the world; I knew God had whispered that I needed to examine my heart and my faith. For the next several years I began a journey I never planned nor expected. In the process, I re-discovered myself and the unlimited kindness, compassion and love of God.

I first began my research into the doctrine of hell. If this doctrine was true, it is one of the most important biblical doctrines. According to most Christian denominations, the vast majority of the world is going to hell. The reality to this view is the devil and wickedness succeed and Christ does not. Has God given humanity an enormous

yoke to ‘save’ the world from ‘hell’? With this in mind I would like to point out what Christ said to His disciples:

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:30 (HCSB)

My personal research and journey may not convince those who believe in eternal punishment but I hope that my evaluation will cause those who believe in the traditional view of hell to further evaluate the inconsistencies of this teaching. Scripture declares the powers of hell will not conquer, yet our traditional view of

an eternal inferno will claim the majority of the world. It is amazing how long this teaching has survived when it logically completely contradicts God's plan (to end death, sorrow and pain). Why would God need to perpetuate death, suffering and sorrow for all eternity? And why is it that satanic beings have victory? Did Christ fail at His mission to save the world?

*Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all **the powers of hell will not conquer it.***

Matthew 16:18 (NLT)

I first began my study into the doctrine of hell by researching why the reformers threw out purgatory and praying for the dead. In my investigation I found a wealth of information that changed what I believed and how I viewed scripture. *As my views of God began to change my love for people began to grow.* This resulted in a much healthier attitude and healthier faith. Many areas in my personal life also began to heal.

By this we come to know (progressively to recognize, to perceive, to understand) the [essential] love: that He laid down His [own] life

*for us; and we ought to lay [our] lives down for
[those who are our] brothers [in Him].*

1 John 3:16 (AMP)

Chapter 1: Wickedness

Dr. R. Scott Thorton wrote that we all act contrary to the will of God, and if grace doesn't extend to everyone, then it goes to none. So, who has any right to determine who is more deserving of God's grace?

How do we understand wickedness? Hitler usually comes to mind. But we can also neglect to judge our own wicked motives, and deeds, as we categorize them as small or insignificant. But if God literally created everyone, how

can He favor anyone? Does He favor perfect people, if so, then why the need for a Savior? Do we need to be born in a specific age to be redeemed or in the right culture?

Many nations are not privy to a Bible or hearing a Gospel message, and several countries do not have a bible translated in their native tongue. So, what happens to those who die who never hear about Christ? Consider a few texts from the following biblical passages.

Scripture teaches at least seven different ages:

1. Evil Age (Galatians 1:4)
2. Present Age (Ephesians 1:21)
3. Future Age (Ephesians 1:21)
4. Worldly Age (Ephesians 2:2)

5. Coming Age (Ephesians 2:7)
6. End of the age (Matthew 13:49)
7. Age of punishment (Matthew 25:46)

God deals with mankind through distinctive periods (ages); these distinct periods, are unfolding to accomplish the salvation of each and every person. Galatians 1:4 teaches that Christ came to redeem the world from the present 'evil age'. Ephesians 1:21 teaches that in God's great power He came to rescue not only those in the present age, but in the age to come. His greatness surpasses any other power or authority. The universe is in the process of growth. In the age to come (the future), all

of creation will be reconciled to their Creator. This is the great mystery revealed to the twelve disciples and Gospels, but...have we missed it entirely?

It is often asserted that scripture is very clear, but if it is so clear, we would not see so many differing opinions among Christianity. Each has a different theological view on every major doctrine within the Christian Faith. Here are a few examples:

- To a Roman Catholic Saving Grace is communicated through the seven sacraments.
- To the Lutheran Grace is through faith alone.
- For an Anabaptist Sacraments are only symbols and do not provide saving grace.

- Those of a Reformed view see Salvation as determined by God, and not by human will.
- To an Arminian Salvation is determined by human free will.

Beginning in the early church there has always been varied and differing opinions on almost every theological topic; there has never been a consensus. I encourage everyone to conduct their own personal study to investigate and learn more about the colorful history of Christian Theology. Scripture is not as clear as we would like it to be and depending on our circles of influence, we generally are not better off by accepting the majority view. The majority view has a history of following the world's

systems. We tend to apply our western cultural ideals and concepts to interpret the Bible. The Bible is an ancient manuscript written by various people, living in an Eastern culture. The Bible requires more consideration than an ordinary book or novel. It takes a lifetime of study. And each time we study, we will always learn something new, because unlike a novel, the bible is life giving water (John 7:38).

Adam and Eve

*In the beginning God (prepared, formed,
fashioned, and) created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis 1:1 (AMP)

Adam and Eve, lived in a perfect paradise, they walked and talked with God. They were the first humans to experience living in a world where no one died or no one suffered. They participated in naming the animals; they lived in peace and harmony with nature. God didn't warn Adam or Eve that they would suffer for all eternity in hell. If this would be the outcome, why not warn them *immediately!* There is no warning (of hell) in the first book of the Bible. The only warning is disobedience would cause death. But, after eating from the tree of knowledge Adam and Eve did not physically die. Adam and Eve died a death that may be more complex than physical. It can be presumed it was a death of sorts:

- Death of a relationship (with God)
- Death of pure love.
- Death of harmony.
- Death of perfection.
- Death of a spiritual body/ conscience

However, we contemplate this ‘death,’ the result has remained for thousands of years: people no longer live in Paradise. Today Millions of people die and suffer by no fault of their own. Eating from the tree of knowledge brought death to all. The important detail missing is that God never mentioned that disobedience would bring

eternal hell. No warning is to be found in the majority of the Old Testament.

Along came the birth of Cain and Abel, now having full knowledge of the outcome of their parent's disobedience, you would assume they would make better choices.

However, eventually Cain would murder his brother.

Paradise is in shambles and this raises the question, did God have a plan? Was God surprised that all He created changed into a great tragedy? Is God in control and can any of this be rectified? Did the events serve a greater purpose? Did God have foreknowledge and insight in how to remedy the situation? And if He did, would He allow for it to continue generation after generation only to send

the vast majority of His beloved creation to an eternity in hell?

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and the earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and Yours it is to be exalted as Head over all.

1 Chronicles 29:11 (AMP)

Centuries have passed; and the world is still suffering from war, hunger and pestilence. How much longer until we see victory? How much longer until the world is redeemed from pain, suffering and death? It has been ingrained in our current age and culture that condemnation equals an eternity in hell. But, the message of the cross is that victory has been won! God no longer holds mankind under the penalty of the law.

For sin shall not [any longer] exert dominion over you, since now you are not under Law [as slaves], but under grace [as subjects of God's favor and mercy]. Romans 6:14 (AMP)

The book of Romans teaches that God in His foreknowledge knew that He would transform *all of creation* back to the original glorified condition. But, depending on your theological background, you will hold on to at least two foundations. The first is that God decided long ago who He would save (Calvinism) and the second view is that salvation is based on human free will (Arminianism). So, while one view paints God as not able to save all of creation based on His unwillingness to do so, the second view contends that God wants to save everyone but must leave it up to fallible people. If one thinks about this long enough, both are problematic. And the reason is simple: why is a Savior unable to redeem an imperfect world that the serpent destroyed? Does mortal man

prevent God from having victory Calvinism says "no",
Arminianism say "yes".

But there is another option in the book of Romans.

Romans, along with other chapters in the old and new testaments, both teach the entire plan of God since before the beginning of time: the restoration of all people. This was a revelation to the twelve disciples, as well as modern day Christians. At one time this view was a view held by many early Patristic Christians, such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa. Without any presuppositions, Romans chapter 5 verses 18-19 provides the foundation of Universalism and the restoration.

Well then, as one man's trespass [one man's false step and falling away led] to condemnation for all men, so one Man's act of righteousness [leads] to acquittal and right standing with God and life for all men. For just as by one man's disobedience (failing to hear, heedlessness, and carelessness) the many were constituted sinners, so by one Man's obedience the many will be constituted righteous (made acceptable to God, brought into right standing with Him). Romans 5:18-19 (AMP)

The majority of believers miss the impact that Christ's one act of righteousness, brought *acquittal and right standing with God for all men*. The assumption (by non-Christians and Christians alike) is that you must accept this gift, and if you refuse you will spend an eternity in hell. But this misconception is not taught in the Old or New Testament. This might surprise many people who have faithfully read their bible for years, and have regularly attended a traditional congregation.

Human beings have no control over the creation of the world, or what transpired in the Garden of Eden. And God certainly isn't still holding a grudge for Adam or Eve's

disobedience! It is through the authority of Scripture, that we know that we serve a God that has an unlimited amount of Mercy and Grace. No deadline and no expiration date, God will transform even prodigals.

And said, O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? And do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In Your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand You. 2 Chronicles 20:6 (AMP)

What do we accept? God has the power to accomplish His will. or that human free will prevents God from accomplishing His plan. If free will is stronger than God, then God will lose all that He created to wickedness. This would mean that wickedness is more powerful than God!

Does this really sound logical and reasonable? Would God hand over everything to fallible people? If God is all powerful, all knowing, and all loving, and He is unable to save everyone, He must be limited in one of these attributes? If God is truly all powerful, all loving and all-knowing then He can accomplish salvation for everyone!

[And the Lord answered] Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Isaiah 49:15 (AMP)

Serial Killer Aileen Wuornos

Is she a victim, victimizer or both? She was abandoned by her mother. Her father was a convicted child molester. Aileen's grandfather raped and beat her as a child; and her grandmother was an alcoholic. By the age of 14 she became pregnant (allegedly by her brother). During her murder trial she claimed that one of her victims raped her, and she killed him in self-defense. Justice was never given to Aileen. She was a victim of her family's wickedness.

Children who grow up in abusive homes are limited and do not have the luxury of learning skills that those who live in loving healthy homes learn. In the case of Aileen, she has a history of abuse. How can anyone recover from such traumatic and troubling conditions? Aileen would turn to a life of prostitution and violence to support herself. She became a product of her environment. Can someone truly heal after such history of child abuse? If Aileen had grown up in a loving home, free from violence and sexual trauma as a child would her character and nature have been different?

How many in the world today are changed in one way or another by the actions of others? The result wickedness

and unrighteousness have a ripple effect starting in the Garden of Eden. How will this be rectified? Injustice has impacted everyone in the world for thousands of years!

Aileen suffered injustice as a child and her victims suffer injustice. Innocent people suffer by no fault of their own.

The action of others impacts us all, and we have no control over what transpires to shape us into less than perfect people. Sin has had a ripple effect.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has made to light upon Him the guilt and iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6 (AMP)

When God allows for sin to run rampant in the world and a person is born into a severely depraved home, how can they cure themselves? It is like expecting a someone with cancer to cure their disease on their own without a doctor. If Christ came to free the captives and bring victory to a lost world, are we literally responsible for the cure to our own disease? Many minds are simply not capable or equipped with making a willful decision. And for arguments sake, we can also conclude that even those who lived in a perfect world (like Adam and Eve) still make wrong choices. Has God left all responsibility to human beings? We have a history of making the wrong decisions, and if our perfect parents (Adam and Eve) cannot, how can we?

*To Him who [earnestly] remembered us in our
low estate and imprinted us [on His heart], for
His mercy and loving-kindness endure forever.*

Psalms 136:23 (AMP)

Cult leader Charles Manson

Manson was born to a teenage mother who was both an alcoholic and prostitute. For most of Manson's early years, he spent time in the custody of the state. He was in and out of foster homes, and various religious and

governmental institutions. Manson claimed he was raped and molested multiple times. He ran away several times to escape the abuse he was subjected to the majority of his young life. Manson tried to return back to his mother but sadly she wanted nothing to do with him. Like Aileen, he found a way to survive by a life of crime. His probation officers noted that Manson suffered from severe rejection. Manson had no control over the conditions he was born into. Feeling loved and accepted is crucial to our emotional and spiritual development. Manson, like many other criminals in our prison systems, never received the most basic human need...love from his biological parents. God designed the world to live by love. Sadly, love is the greatest famine in the world today. When we lose our

connection to God and those around us, we have lost an essential element to function the way we were created. When love is restored in our soul it will allow for us to become connected to God and others. If any human is deprived of love, they become twisted and distorted. When wickedness was introduced into the world, the result was death of love for our creator and our fellowman. Love is the most important factor that contributes to all our needs, (physical, mental and spiritual). We all need a steady diet of love. The most important commandment is to love others. It is only when we allow ourselves the ability to connect to each other through love that we can bring healing to one another and to the world. Manson will never be neglected by God the

way he was by his earthly parents. God is a Father to those abandoned by their fathers and mothers.

Although my father and my mother have forsaken me, yet the Lord will take me up [adopt me as His child]. Psalm 27:10 (AMP)

Christ came to heal the sick. Aileen and Manson are patients of God who needed His healing. Their mothers and fathers failed at providing them the love and protection they needed. Society failed at giving the help Aileen and Manson desperately needed. The system is exhausted with many similar situations. Injustice befell everyone, but there is good news. The world is no longer

under the condemnation of the law, *but is under the law of Grace.*

And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

Romans 5:16 (NLT)

While we live in a fallen world, even with the advancement in science and technology, there is no cure for human brokenness. Everyone has experienced a loss of perfection. What hope is left if the only 'justice' that remains for humanity is to remain estranged eternally

from their creator? Is this good news to the person addicted to drugs, living on the street, or to those starving in a third world country? What hope is there if eternal hell awaits someone who never read a Bible or never meet a Christian missionary? Has God rested the salvation of the world on imperfect mankind? Or has He given this task to the Savior who came to take away the sins of the world.

*The next day John saw Jesus coming to him and said,
Look! There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin
of the world! John 1:29 (NLT)*

The traditional view must be tested with the love,
compassion, and grace of the Savior of the World.
Manson and Eileen did not become damaged by choice,

but by the choices of others. Abuse and trauma shaped their heart and mind. And if we logically examine the evidence of a moral and upright God, we cannot as compassionate people accept that anyone deserves endless punishment. God, who created all, must provide mercy for all. God has the moral responsibility for all His creation.

When we learn to weep as Jesus did over the distressing lack of love in the world, we are beginning to learn the love and compassion of the Father. When we begin to feel (taking to heart) inwardly the injustices in our world, we are learning the mind of Christ. When we promote ourselves by our set of traditions of men, we have lost sight of our purpose.

Our very purpose on earth is to help our fellowman. God does not segregate people the way our traditions have. Wars and fighting over ‘theology’ have resulted in a history of religious atrocity. When we live by the light of love, we include, not exclude. Religion with its ritualistic traditions of men has a history of excluding people. And this is what Christ fought against. Many of the people who rejected Christ were believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the one true God). Yet, we have the privilege of learning from their mistake. They saw people not through God’s eyes, but through the eyes of manmade dogma. Christ warned they would be last in the Kingdom of God. A far distance from what is taught today, that the ‘unbeliever’ (atheist or non-Christian) will be eternally

condemned. Christ warned the devoutly religious believers they would be punished the most severe (see Matthew Chapter 23).

The religious leaders missed the entire message of Christ. Are we surprised that history repeats itself? Christ wept for the down cast. Do we expect that He will not do the same for all imperfect people (we have all like sheep gone astray)? Labels are what we give people. When we begin to include, rather than look for ways to exclude people, we are growing in our love. When we refuse to do so, our hearts tend to grow cold and callous, and become lovers of self. Jesus reached out to those who were ridiculed by the religious leaders (self-righteous).

We all read scripture with our own presuppositions.

Protestants insist that we are saved through faith alone and Catholics maintain it is through works and church Sacraments. But, let's take a step back and study what Christ teaches in the Gospels.

Let us consider the message of the story of the Good Samaritan; Christ praised the Samaritan and his example. The Samaritan had love and compassion for his neighbor, the Priest and the Levite passed on by without any conviction to help a person in need. They were not moved with love or compassion; their own religious bigotry caused them to have a lack of empathy for anyone not affiliated with their religion. The Samaritan's act of love

was extraordinary. He could have easily done nothing, but it was his heart that was pure and righteous. (See Luke 10:25-37).

Another example Christ gives of utmost importance is the account of the rich man and Lazarus, in the book of (Luke 16:22-30). The rich man was clothed in fine linen on earth but is suffering in the fires of hell, he is requesting water from Lazarus but is not able to find relief. He had failed to help Lazarus while he was alive, and now on the other side of life he is in a hellish condition pleading to come back to warn his family! Many believe the most important interpretation to be taken from this passage is endless hell. But is this the theme of the parable? The rich man allowed

his heart to become so cold and indifferent to the needs of the less fortunate; he had all he needed in life. God is allowing for him to be trained by this experience, and the outcome is love and compassion for others. Punishment has a remedy and removes indifference. Compassion and love for others is a very important principle; without it, how can anyone be fit to live in the Kingdom of God? If we are not convicted and trained here on earth, we will learn through the remedial punishment of the intermediate state until we learn the way of the Master.

Another example of the principle of learning love and compassion is in Matthew 25, those on the right had love and compassion for their fellow man; they fed the poor,

gave to those in need, and visited those in prison. To those on the right, Christ welcomed into the Kingdom, they were highly esteemed for having a heart and desire to care for others. Those on the left are rejected, yet they had faith, they even cast out demons in the name of Christ. Our Lord and Savior reminded them they lacked love and compassion. He goes so far as to tell them He never even knew them because they never looked out for the less fortunate. If faith in Christ was essential, Christ neglected to speak of faith or belief in His existence as being the factor for acceptance into His Kingdom. Love and compassion are emphasized. Another example is found in the story of Sodom their greatest sin was that of their lack of love and compassion.

Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters (outlying cities) had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

Ezekiel 16:49 (AMP)

Without love in our heart, our faith is dead. As a Christian it is easy to fall into the mindset of going to church, and having belief, but not having a living faith that results in growing in love and compassion.

“So, you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”

James 2:17-19 (NLT)

In short Universalism supports the ideology that faith and deeds are essential to prepare us for the coming Kingdom of God. Universalism, like Calvinism teaches that salvation is secured by the blood of Christ and like Arminianism we must also have deeds. Love and compassion are essential, without it we could hear the words “I never knew you.”

Chapter 2: Why Believe Universal Restoration

The beauty of Universal Restoration is we can simply love people with no strings attached. We do not see people through the lens of who is in or who is out of the “Christian club” in heaven. We are truly free to love one another, without the presumptions that someone is doomed to an eternity in hell.

Why would Universal Restoration be heretical when it supports two important characteristics of faith—God's

sovereignty and man's Free will? Calvinism and Arminianism are two of the most widely accepted theological models, yet one denies God's unlimited love for the entire world and the other limits God's sovereignty. This is problematic for both Calvinism and Arminianism. Universal Restoration does not limit God's love or sovereignty. Punishment is for our own good, remedial punishment, be restoration with our Heavenly Father.

The Gospels always emphasized love for enemies, to visit those in prison, to feed those who were hungry. Certainly, Christ is teaching that we are to love and care for all people, love is the greatest commandment of all. Why

would Christ (or we) put limits on God's Grace, even after physical death? His supply is unlimited!

Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others]. 1 Peter 4:8 (AMP)

It would be inconsistent for God to limit love in such a way that He would forsake having mercy even for those who we believe are without hope. If He limited love to only a few it would be contradictory of His command to sinful people to love with no limits. Why would God be

stingy with His love or mercy? Why the time limit to this life if grace *is amazing*?

It is not difficult to accept that people can be stingy. The Calvinism model lacks empathy, love, and compassion...the very principles that Christ taught in the Gospels.

Calvinism completely overrides Christ and His principles by teaching that God only saves the chosen 'elect'. Christ has declared everyone has value and because all of us are valuable and will be redeemed by their creator. The greatest commandment in scripture is to; "*love our neighbor as ourselves*". Can we love our neighbor as ourselves when they are in torment for eternity; can we

put aside every principal Christ taught while we are in God's Kingdom? If eternal punishment is true, then all the principles Christ taught are meaningless. Love for neighbor, love and compassion of those in prison, the less fortunate, etc.

Eternal conscience torment is not compatible with the heart of our Father who desires all come to know Him. Christ's commands to care for those who are suffering, and He adheres to His own principles and mandates Many near death experiencers turn to Christ for help in hell, and Christ does not forsake them, He is attentive to their repentance. Scripture proclaims that "Every knee will bow", God doesn't force worship and never accepts false

worship. The Arminianism model overemphasizes human will placing limits on God's ability to accomplish salvation for everyone. Like the Calvinist version, God is limited in securing salvation for the majority of the world. Universalism places no such limits on God's Grace.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater and mightier than all [else]; and no one is able to snatch [them] out of the Father's hand.

John 10:29 (AMP)

Universal Restoration is the only model that is consistent with Scripture and the character and nature of God. Therefore, He *completes* and *secures* salvation for everyone. The good news!

Other religions, is there hope?

Lee was brought up in a Buddhist home; he was never exposed to the gospel, a bible or a theist version of life or death. Lee was literally on his death bed and began to tell his grandson about an angel that was visiting him. To his grandson's amazement the angel was sharing the gospel account of the death, and resurrection of Christ. Does God send angels to speak to people? Yes, he does, God makes no distinction between "worthy" or "unworthy." All of humanity is worthy of grace and love. It doesn't matter to God what church, mosque, or temple you went to while living on earth.

Therefore, if you have ever been molested or mistreated by anyone in the church, God is going to heal and transform you instantly. Even if you have never heard the Gospel in your life because you lived in a non-Christian nation, He is going to reveal Himself to all creation. The end result will be good news and reconciliation. Universal Restoration does not limit the attributes of God like Calvinism or Arminianism. Universal Restoration is consistent with every biblical principle found in scripture.

The Annihilation View

God does not grant eternal life to everyone it is conditional. Although this is less crude than an eternity of suffering, it begs the question, what happened to our Savior who defeated death and the devil? Does the devil win the majority of creation, and Christ only redeems a few? The annihilation view restricts the victory of Christ, just as the eternal torment view does. Restoration is the only view that upholds the complete victory of the cross that defeated the devil, death and estrangement from our creator.

The Universal Restoration View

God destroys unrighteousness and restores all people from every nation. *The blind receives their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed (by healing) and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news (the Gospel) preached to them.*

Matthew 11:5 (AMP)

Evangelism

In the majority of evangelism training programs, there is a tendency to use formulas and methods, rather than simply loving people. The problem with using formula methods is it prevents the ability to truly love with no strings attached. The other tendency with Evangelism methods is you can become more concerned with getting a decision rather than being genuine. The mentality that you are saving people by sharing the Gospel is an invitation that leads to self-righteousness (in my opinion).

Unfortunately, what can follow is the mindset that if someone doesn't accept your model of redemption they are lost and will go to hell. It has been ingrained in our culture that if someone doesn't get 'saved' they will be damned forever. According to our definitions they will suffer a horrible fate of eternal hell or complete extinction. Using formulated methods dehumanizes people by segregating who we think is going to heaven and who isn't. Consider the Pharisee (the religious leaders of Jesus earthy ministry); they didn't accept anyone who didn't fit into their own religious model. The disciples on the other hand were ordinary men. They didn't feel superior to anyone and were willing to die for what they witnessed. The disciples came to understand that non-Jews are equal

and included in God's redemption. No superior mindset can be established when you comprehend God's incredible plan of restoring the entire world.

While being trained by a large evangelism ministry, the emphasis was sharing only the Gospel—it was irrelevant if someone was suffering in any capacity (health, financial, loss of a loved one). This method lacked love and compassion. The focus was not on the individual or their questions of concerns, it was getting a decision, and following the formula.

Have you ever noticed that when Christ shared the Gospel, He treated the religious leaders differently than tax collectors and prostitutes? He didn't immediately start

preaching or demanding people to accept Him. In fact, I noticed that Christ didn't seem to be preoccupied with non-Jews accepting Him. I also noticed that those He sternly warned were the devoted believers!

Time and time again in the Gospels Christ continually emphasized love as being the greatest doctrine. Some say it was hell, but hell was emphasized by Christ only towards the religious leaders (pharisee) who did "believe" in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:12 (NLT)

Abusive Religion

Watchman.org lists 1,200 religious organizations and beliefs (within Christianity). Without a doubt, religion has been used to control and manipulate people throughout the history of the world.

Many people reject the messengers of Christ and the concepts they teach. Meet Kim, an avid atheist who rejected Christianity on the basis that she was molested by her father (a Deacon in the church). As a child she went on many mission trips, sang in many choir programs and accepted Jesus in her heart. However, the abuse was severe, and she rejected all religious concepts of God

when she was an adult. Can anyone blame her? Further damage was done when her own family disowned her because she no longer believed in God. But was it truly God who she stopped believing in?

Meet another person who was damaged by 'abusive' concepts of God. Ronald was a caring father and attentive husband. His wife would leave him after she became born again at a revival in Florida. She said it was God who told her to leave him if he didn't accept Christ as his Savior. Ronald was devastated. She was true to her promise and she divorced him.

Allegiance to Hell

Many faithful and devoted Pastors have lost their job for questioning if an eternal torment in hell is biblically correct. Many seem to fear that without eternal hell people will run far from God and will sin more. But it seems to have the opposite effect; eternal hell indoctrination has caused many to disregard Christ altogether.

Imagine how many people fear what God will do to them if they don't accept the image portrayed by people who claim to have a personal relationship with God. Should Kim learn to live with her mistrust and recite a mantra to

satisfy the demand to ‘accept Jesus’? God desires true worshippers who come to Him in spirit and truth. Not through forced manipulation and fear. What healthy relationship is built on fear of being harmed for all eternity? None. Healthy relationships are built on the foundation of love. Our relationship with God is no different.

Religion has a history of people using the Bible or other inspired writings to justify their pride or prejudiced behavior. The spouse, who abuses physically or mentally, will use passage from the bible. Many hate-based groups use the Bible. The list continues and extends into denominational circles, holding contempt for those with

different denominational backgrounds: Sabbath keepers condemn those who worship on Sunday. Those who speak in tongues question the salvation of those who do not speak in tongues. Does any Christian sect have infallibility? No, because we are all human beings doing the best we can, all who love God and wish to please Him. Because we are all individuals, we are going to express our love and devotion in a multitude of ways.

So then, we must pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.

Romans 14:19(HCSB)

Cults and Heretics

There is concern that God can't save those in a 'cult ' or that those in ' cults' are workers of deception. This mindset re-enforces prejudice, fear, and suspicion. This is not a spirit of Godly love; it can only breed contempt for other people who view God differently. Grace is amazing because it covers all doctrinal error well as human error. We are all a work-in-progress. The disciples had a similar fear and attitude about those outside their group. Christ corrected them:

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn't in our group. Don't stop him!" Jesus said. "No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.

Mark 9:38-40 (HCSB)

We are free to love and worship God unique to us. Every relationship is based on love and God is no different. He seeks our whole heart, and forced is not the type worship He desires. Religion kills, but the spirit brings life. As fallible human beings, it takes a lifetime to learn many things. For most of our earthly life we will try to maintain

and balance relationships, along with all of life's complications. Maintaining our everyday life is difficult in many ways, and now we need to figure out something complex like God? Add to this the many confusing religions claiming to represent the one true God. The Christian faith has thousands of denominational organizations, most contradict each other. *If God wanted to 'save 'us, why did He make it so difficult?* With the many different versions and translations of the Bible, it isn't hard to see why so many give up on finding God. Over thirty English translations are listed on a Bible web site, along with various commentaries. Many devoted people read the bible, but have a multitude of different versions of biblical truth.

For He [Who is the source of their prophesying] is not a God of confusion and disorder but of peace and order. As [is the practice] in all the churches of the saints (God's people). 1 Corinthians 14:33 (AMP)

The two traditional held views, Calvinism and Arminianism both fall under an exclusive theological model which restrict the way God can accomplish salvation for everyone. Inclusive theology maintains it is possible to know Christ, without knowing the specifics of Him. The gospels indicate that the law is written on the heart, so no one is without knowledge. We know right from wrong, love from hate. Gandhi stated that there are multiple definitions of God, because God has many facets.

God is complex, and who can understand all His ways.

Peter understood this same concept.

But in every nation, he who venerates and has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him and {sure of being received and welcomed [by Him]}. Acts 10:35 (AMP)

Since Peter understood from Christ that Salvation is not by our works, Peter is expressing some nations of people are unknowingly working with and following Christ without having explicit knowledge of Him. Peter is coming to realize as a Jew, that many non-Jews are following the light of Christ. This supports the notion that

God is not depending on fallible people to save other fallible people. Mainstream western minds have rejected inclusive theology based on the dominant view that one must have explicit knowledge of Christ.

How one changes their will is by a series of events. Trials and sufferings are sometimes the way we learn the will of the Father. Trials teach compassion and the ability to see from all perspectives so that we can learn from our mistakes, and make corrections. Missionaries report of many today who have visions and dreams meeting Christ. Still others experience Christ by a near death experience. Howard Storm was an atheist who converted to Christianity when he was clinically dead in the hospital.

Other near death experiences report being rescued with similar details. The common theme is realization of their own selfish condition and God showering them with unconditional love. The near-death hellish experience is not excluded to non-believers, but believers have them too. Evangelist Rev. Kenneth Hagin, a Baptized believer found himself in a hellish realm, God rescues those in the hellish realm. Having a genuine encounter our redeemer would transform anyone. This is what is being reported all over the world. God is revealing Himself to both believers and nonbelievers; *who all report being transformed by God's unconditional love*. The ways God is working in our world varies. We are not always aware of them, but it is a mistake to think that Christians are

responsible for saving people. Christ has already saved people and He is not limited in the way He does it. God is everywhere. His love, kindness and compassion are beyond the depths of the grave. The lessons from the Gospels teach that we are to have tender hearts towards one another. We can never escape the plan of God, not even in the depths of the grave. He is everywhere. Divine love is beyond our comprehension. God never ceases seeking out troubled souls. Whether they are in the clutches of their own deceptions, or deeply damaged. God takes all steps to reach out to all souls—those deemed a lost cause—this is His specialty. If David and Moses both murdered in their own ‘wickedness’, and God used them both in extraordinary ways, hope if for all. David and

Moses did reap restorative punishment from their error, but in the end also received mercy and grace. So again, God does not abandon forever.

Who is a God like You, who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy and loving-kindness. Micah 7:18 (AMP)

What are we 'saved 'from'?

- The wrath of God?
- The anger and vengeance of God?
- Eternal punishment and suffering in hell?
- Death (physical or spiritual)?

- Separation from God?
- Annihilation?
- Slavery to sin?
- Satan?
- Our selfishness?
- Human ignorance?

Traditionally speaking, we have been taught we are being saved from God's anger at sin, which is an eternity in a fire with suffering. Why would God make it so difficult for the majority of the world to find Him? If the theology of eternal hell or annihilation is absolutely true this does not entice very many people to trust in a God of love and grace. If grace is free and it cannot be earned by works,

why do most theological definitions emphasis our ‘works
‘in order to gain salvation?

Is it all up to us? Some days I am lucky to find my car keys. How can God trust me to find out all there is to know in such a short life span? Does He know me? I am not that competent. Fortunately, God is full of Grace and promises to reconcile all of His beloved creation.

Scripture states we are saved from the penalty of sin, which is *death*. But death no longer holds any power over us, Christ defeated death, and has the keys to death. So, can we sin all we want? No, the point isn’t about getting to sin all we desire, the point is that, “*where sin increased, grace increased all the more*” (Romans 5:20).” So just as

sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:21).

Mankind is fallible and the fall in Eden damaged our relationship with our Creator. God’s Grace made a way, and we shall not fear that our own ideas and misconception can be an obstacle for God. We are not born on earth only to be lost eternally from our Creator in eternity. **He promises to restore all of creation.**

Whom heaven must receive [and retain] until the time for the complete Restoration of all that God spoke by the

mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past [from the most ancient time in the memory of man].

Acts 3:21 (AMP)

He promises to heal everyone.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement [needful to obtain] peace and well-being for us was upon Him, and with the stripes [that wounded] Him we are healed and made whole. Isaiah 53:5 (AMP)

He promises to transform everything.

Who will transform and fashion anew the body of our humiliation to conform to and be like the body of His

*glory and majesty, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject **everything to Himself**. Philippians 3:21 (AMP)*

He promises to reconcile all things.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18 (AMP)

Grace covers our ideas about who God is, God knows our hearts, our sorrows, and our limitations. He knows that Faithful seekers all have intentions in doing their best to understand God, but all are not unified in their interpretations. Let us consider a God of *amazing grace*.

Limited to those God arbitrarily elects to salvation (Calvinism).

Limited to those who exercise their free will (Arminianism).

Unlimited based on the victory of the Christ! (Universal Restoration).

The first two views exclude the majority of creation. Why would God need to limit the victory of Christ? Christ *won total victory* over death and alienation from the creator of the world. This is great news! Can we trust God?

Assuredly YES, we can!

What disadvantage does the non-Christian have that has never been baptized or has never placed faith in Christ?

Does it nullify the good news of the Gospel or the victory Christ has brought to the world? What better answer than

the testimony of Romans Chapter 3:1-4 *What if some did not believe and had no faith? Does their lack of faith and their faithlessness nullify and make ineffective and void the faithfulness of God and His fidelity [to His Word]? By no means!* (AMP)

God has not left anyone in the world without hope! This is truly good news and one that has been forgotten. Isn't it time we all place our faith in what God can do, and not what we can do. He will transform everyone, and everything that was destroyed by the evil one.

The light in the eyes [of him whose heart is joyful] rejoices the hearts of others, and good news nourishes the bones. Proverbs 15:30 (AMP)

Chapter 3: Objections against Restoration

1. Eric Stetson observes how fundamentalism asserts that their view of the Gospel is the only understanding. But fundamentalism presents the world with a false Gospel that is anything but good ‘news’. In reality, it causes many to run far from God.

Objections from a traditionalist

1. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Reply: We live in a world that provides bad news daily, we can become cynical. When you are accustomed to bad news on a daily basis, even Salvation can be looked upon as fatalism.

2. Universal Restoration doesn't have a good answer for the hell passages of Scripture. If we're all saved, why does Jesus talk as if we're not all saved?

Reply: Because Christ was dealing with the unbelief of Israel, and even His disciples.

- Peter denied Him.

- Thomas wouldn't believe unless he saw His wounds.
- The spiritual leaders of Israel attributed Jesus's miracles to Satan.

*Afterward he appeared to the eleven as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their **unbelief and hardness of heart**, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.*

Mark 16:14 (HCSB)

3. Universal Restoration doesn't have a good answer for the passages that speak of hell being eternal. Quibbling

over the Greek for this word or that word doesn't leave one with a strong feeling that Universal Restoration is correct.

Reply: Being faithful to meaning of words can have devastating results. The Character and Nature of God is love and compassion, this should take first priority (faith in God's nature). Also, many Scholars, who have been trained in Greek, differ over the modern interpretations of the meaning of the word eternal.

4. When sharing the ‘Good News’, Jesus and the disciples never tell people that everyone is saved, only that if they believe and repent, they are saved.

Reply: Scripture does not teach you can be ‘saved’ apart from repentance or Christ. Scripture sets no deadline. Scripture does teach mercy beyond the grave.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (HCSB)

5. I've read the entire Bible several times and I've never come away with the idea that we're all saved. This can be explained by my presuppositions or it can be explained by the fact that the Bible doesn't teach Universal Restoration.

Reply: The Bible is in layers; God doesn't give it to us all at once. If we are growing, we are always going to see new things we never saw before. This is the natural result of a living maturing faith.

6. If Universal Restoration is true, why don't more credible biblical scholars endorse it? I find too many of

the books on Universal Restoration to be written by Sunday school teachers with no formal training in Greek or Hebrew.

Reply: Many Early Church Fathers, whose native language was Greek, did not teach Eternal Hell, they believed and taught Universal Restoration. God uses ordinary and unlikely people. For example: Paul the persecutor of the church, Moses the Murderer, David the adulterer and murderer, Peter who denied Christ three times! God uses ordinary people for extraordinary things! Many who believe in Universalism do not let this be known for fear of the consequences. Examples: There are Pastors and Scholars who are afraid of losing their job, or being called

a heretic. Rob Bell is one such Pastor who was deemed a 'heretic' 'just because he wrote a book asking some questions.

God's prophets have always been in the minority. God operates contrary to what we 'expect'.

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar?

Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not

God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1 Corinthians 1:20 (HCSB)

7. Too many of the books on Universal Restoration tackle the issue from a heart side and not from the head side. I

want to believe Universal Restoration is true too, but when I look at Scripture, I find it hard to accept.

Reply: The evidence can sometimes be right before us, we may need to break barriers, and lose preconceived notions. Regardless of any view, no one is perfected in knowledge or free from error. We can however make reasonable assessments, by coming to a conclusion of which holds up to scrutiny. In my opinion Universal Restoration is by far is the most consistent with scripture and the Character of God. We have all observed in life that anything can be taken out of context. Hell has been taken out of context for centuries! Are we ready for a new reformation? It is

already taking place, but we can shield ourselves from anything if we wish to remain in our own comfort zone.

The pattern within the scripture displays how every action has a ripple effect on the world. Genesis chapter one reveals how everything was perfect. In the Old Testament, the chosen nation of Israel was given a direct revelation from God, who planned to restore and reconcile all mankind. They assumed this meant only the nation of Israel. When Christ walked on earth the teachers of the law remained in unbelief. They didn't understand why Christ would talk to tax collectors and prostitutes. They couldn't comprehend that God's love extended to everyone. It was beyond their comprehension. The

majority today, assumes that God favors those who label themselves as Christian and that He shows partiality to only one class of people. Imagine if Christ returned today, would He be recognized by established Christianity? It appears many Christians have the same mindset as the religious leaders of the third century.

But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God have no favorites.

Colossians 3:25 (NLT)

Christ had a difficult time with convincing those in leadership that God sent a Savior. The problem was their exclusive conditions placed on those outside their religious customs. It was unbelievable that God loved the

entire world and salvation was completed for everyone.

Historically religion has a habit of excluding people on a different basis than God. Christ however accepted the people who were excluded by organized religious leaders!

The good news about the Gospel is that everyone is justified freely!

[All] are justified and made upright and in right standing with God, freely and gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favor and mercy), through the redemption which is [provided] in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:34 (AMP)

The NT confirms that some conversions happen after death, and some conversion will proceed to happen when Christ sets up an earthly Kingdom. Many who reject

Universal Restoration will admit that not everyone who dies has been exposed to the Gospel. As the apostles realized, all nations who worship God, have the law written on their heart. All are indeed on the path of repentance and regeneration.

Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. Romans 2:14 (NLT)

The eventual outcome is that every created individual will be restored and reconciled back into their creator.

Conversions Types

1. Without explicit knowledge of Christ-The Law is written on their hearts: Many people die across the globe, not knowing anything about Jesus. But their heart is tuned into His satellite station.

They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. Romans 2:15 (NLT)

2. Second chances (post mortem): God is in supply of extreme love, grace, mercy and patience. Christ shared the gospel message to those who did not believe in their lifetime.

For this reason, the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged by men in the fleshly realm, they might live by God in the spiritual realm. 1 Peter 4:6 (HCSB)

3. Those that profess and believe in their heart (having explicit knowledge).

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (HCSB)

A professing believer is held to a higher standard. This is the opposite of what traditions have taught for generations. Every person is held accountable for the life they lead. Everyone must live in a manner consistent with the law of love. What about how we treat others? If we recall passages from the gospel, we learn that the most devoted to their profession of faith, could also be the cruelest. It is possible to have a heart far from God but always have Him on our lips.

Example of John Doe: (a believer)

Occupation: Teacher of Law.

Obituary: A Firm Believer who kept the letter of the law.

Crime: Rejected the spirit of the law and did not apply this knowledge while living on earth.

Afterlife Fate: Determined by God (Salvation secure, sanctification to be determined).

Deeds: Cheated widows and made lengthy prayers for show.

Profession can be defined many ways, but most importantly it will shine through the way we live and how we treat others. We will know them by their fruit (evidence how we treat others). Our good and bad deeds matter. Genuine faith will produce good works, such as love and compassion for others (Luke 10:25-37).

Example of Jayne Doe: (a non-believer)

Occupation: Housewife.

Obituary: An Atheist raised in a church going home.

Crime: Rejected all elements of established religion.

Afterlife Fate: To be determined by God (Salvation
secure, sanctification to be determined).

Deeds: Helped the less fortunate to the best of her ability.

It is impossible as human being to determine who has a heart right towards God. The actions of others are tangible, but motives are not something we can be certain. God is the judge who knows both.

So do not make any hasty or premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are [now hidden] in darkness and disclose and expose the [secret] aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his [due] commendation from God.

1 Corinthians 4:5 (AMP)

Is Punishment cruel and forever? God is not cruel. Even our justice system has in place a law preventing cruel and unusual punishment. Punishing someone for all eternity is cruel, unusual and excessive. A traditionalist believed that the flood of Noah was cruel, but it was an act of love of God, those who died are not without hope. The Gospel is

preached to the dead. And Christ is the advocate for the “unrighteous”. (See 1 Peter 4:6)

A Baptist minister once said that if a civil society looks at the horror of torturing people, how can that same society think nothing of God torturing souls forever?

It is because of the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness that we are not consumed, because His [tender] compassions fail not.

Laminations 3:22 (AMP)

Universal Restoration lowers the bar

Some make the accusation that Universal Restoration lowers the bar because if punishment is temporary and not eternal people will sin more. Universal Restoration actually raises the bar in the same way as Arminianism teaches the fruit of our lives matter at judgment. Arminianism determines that to remain in Christ you must continually remain consistent in your walk of faith by deeds (helping others, living a life pleasing to God becoming more like Christ). In this way

universal restoration is compatible with scripture that teaches we all have free will to return to a life of rebellion. Universal Restoration also agrees with Calvinism that salvation has been secured by Christ, not by works. The second part to this same objection is with no hell you will have utter rebellion. This couldn't be further than the truth. The world has been in rebellion since the fall in the Garden of Eden. The threat of death directly from God did not prevent Adam and Eve from rebellion. God restored salvation to the world through love, we must instill love and grace to all without the self-righteous spirit that was portrayed by the pharisees. Since salvation is not earned by human works then what can be lost? Universal Restoration teaches the necessity to be prepared to live in

the Kingdom of God, you must go through a refining process either in this life or in the next. Universal Restoration—unlike Unitarian Universalism— is NOT teaching there is no judgment or hell; it is teaching that eschatological punishment is not eternal for the sake of vengeance.

But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are! Nehemiah 9:31(NLT)

Comparison Chart

Universal Restoration	Unitarian Universalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accepts the Trinity• Christ is the only road to salvation• The Bible is their Authority• God restores through corrective punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rejects the Trinity• Many roads to salvation• The Bible is one of many authorities• God does not use corrective punishment

Purification Process

Being purified of earthly desires can be a painful process, no doubt. This is why it is so essential to heed the warnings in scripture. An intermediate state of purification is an easy concept for those in a Catholic, Orthodox, and Judaism tradition. So, in essence, universal restoration does not lower the bar, it raises the bar. The parable of the soils' (Mark Chapter 4) is a great encouragement to put faith into action by obeying the new nature given by Christ.

For now, and recognize this: Every sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolater, does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God.

Ephesians 5:5 (HCSB)

Not only does universal restoration raise the bar, it also gives hope to those who find out that separation from God is indeed real. Because salvation was secured by the precious blood of Christ, repentance in the next world will bring restoration, because God is faithful. God is always faithful. He is for us, not against us (Romans 8:31)

For Your faithful love for me is great, and You deliver my life from the depths of Sheol. Psalm 86:13 (HCSB)

Other Objections

- 1. You must believe in Jesus to be saved by His death on the cross.**

Reply: Even demons believe so obviously "belief" cannot be the sole determinant for salvation. According to the restoration view, there's nothing else anyone needs to do because Christ accomplished it all on Calvary and

declared it to be "finished." What *is* left is for people to do is to grow spiritually so that transformation occurs within the heart. This change is accomplished by the willingness to live by the principles taught by Christ. Anyone can profess faith, but it must be backed up by deeds.

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? James 2:14 (NLT)

2. Some will perish in a fiery torment forever.

Reply: People will be corrected, but it is not for all eternity. God's punishments have a purpose and when that purpose is met the punishment comes to an end. Scripture teaches in Jer 7:20, that God's anger will burn against Jerusalem but more importantly His anger will not be quenched. But in Jer 31:38-40, Jerusalem is rebuilt so it's clear from this example that phrases like "forever" and "unquenchable" don't automatically mean eternal in the literal sense. When the purpose is met and a remedy is accomplished.

“For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever.”

Lamentations 3:21

3. It's your choice to burn in hell.

Reply: God will not rest until all are reunited in peace and love. Mankind cannot take credit for any part of salvation. It is God whose love never ceases and contends for all people from every tribe and nation.

And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins. Jeremiah 31:34 (NLT)

**4. You must come willingly by profession at a church
or by being baptized as a baby.**

Reply: All will come willingly and will have full knowledge. *ALL* of His creation will know Him. All accomplished by Christ. In the next age all deceptions will be removed and the truth will come to light. All generations will have full knowledge. We can count on this account taught in scripture. For the Creator of the universe is unwilling to lose anyone to the evil one. And evil is really the result of the world without God. God has promised He will never leave or forsake us and at some

point, we will return to Him, because He never gives up on anyone. We see this in the parable of the lost prodigal.

5. You must come willingly through a committed denominational membership?

Reply: Many of Paul's letters speak of those still stuck in legalism of trying to be justified by the law. This rule still applies to those who get stuck in the legalism that their dogma will save them.

For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (¹delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it

came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8 (AMP)

6. What about the worm that never dies?

Reply: No literal worms. This is an extreme expression to warn people. The same expression is used (see Mark 9:47, Luke 14:26) to cut off arms, pluck out eyes and hate your family. *It is extremely dangerous* to interpret ancient languages literally. By no means are we to hate anyone or cut off any limbs!

When Mark 9:47 teaches if your arm causes you to sin cut it off, we understand that this is not a literal command.

The three important character traits of God; (loving, kind, and compassionate).

7. What about Daniel 12:2?

Reply: Shame and contempt does not indicate an eternity in hell. It does however indicate that the life we lead and the decision we make can bring us shame. Our actions and deeds do matter on earth. Regardless if we profess Christ, we all are judged.

8. What about God and Justice?

Reply: God's love is His justice. God no longer holds sin against us. He remembers our sin no more. We are living in the age of Grace, and through this Grace we will each reflect and learn the injustice we have contributed. Every person will go through a process of having full knowledge of their actions to reflect the good and bad they contributed to the world.

It is I who sweep away your transgressions for My own sake and remember your sins no more. Isaiah 43:25
(HCSB)

Objection: In the original Greek "All" does not mean the entire creation, but means "collectively, some of all types" it is the same word used when it says "all" men have gone after him, speaking in past tense regarding the life of Christ. We know that while Christ was alive not "all" men went after Him. This particular word is used only 7-8 times in scripture and rarely means a literal "all" but is used to indicate various people groups. I also want to add that yes, He is indeed the Savior of "all" but whether you receive this is a choice. A course in Greek would do Universalist's well.

Reply: The word ‘all’ (Greek ‘pas’ Strong’s 3956) “is only used 7 - 8 times in scripture” that is not correct. Actually, this word is used hundreds of times throughout Scripture. True, it’s not translated as ‘all’ in each case but it’s translated as ‘all’ over 400 times in the NAS so it’s clearly used more than 7 or 8 times. The word ‘all’ has 7 or 8 senses so perhaps that is what was meant. I agree that in John 12:19, ‘all’ is used in a collective rather than a literal sense and does not mean every person. But ‘all’ does mean every person in many passages such as Romans 3:23 (*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* - NASB) or Romans 5:12 (*“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all*

sinned” - NASB). To say that the word ‘all’ is “rarely” used in a literal sense is simply not true. And finally, the comment about needing to know Greek is irrelevant for this discussion. The Greek word ‘pas’ has been translated as ‘all’ and so the argument is not over the word but the intended meaning the author had in mind and all the Greek in the world can’t answer that question. For example, presumably we both know English but if I wrote the sentence, “I don’t like my car because it rides too rough.” you wouldn’t know if I was complaining about the performance of the engine or the performance of the suspension. A Ph.D. in English wouldn’t help you interpret the meaning of my sentence. We have the same situation here. ‘Pas’ has been interpreted as ‘all’ and

nobody disagrees this is correct. The question is what did the author mean when he used the word ‘all’ and only he would know for sure. Knowing Greek cannot determine the author’s intent. Regarding 1 Timothy 4:10, if you read it without any presuppositions, it certainly seems to imply that all men will be saved. But nobody comes to the Bible with a clean slate. Everyone reads every line of scripture through a lens. If you believe God will not save all men, then you don’t interpret this passage as teaching all will be saved. And at this point, it’s not one’s knowledge of Greek that determines the interpretation, it’s one’s presuppositions.

Eternal Punishment

According to Baptist and traditional hell, those who do not make a decision for Christ are going to be spend eternity in hell. It is necessary to point out that according to Christ, it is those who believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (believers) who abused others, would be judged with a heavier sentence. And Christ warned those on the left, who believed in the one true God they would be punished.

This group had an abundance of superiority complex.

Christ is warning those who believe in the one true God of

a severe punishment. It is not the atheist, or non-believer being sternly warned.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces; for you neither ENTER yourselves, nor do you allow those who are about to go in to do so.

Matthew 23:13 (AMP)

Notice in the Gospels all are welcomed and Christ did not indicate that He only invited the righteous, worthy or religious. To the contrary. Christ indicated He would not be happy with an outcome of leaving the sick in their condition (the un-righteous). And we can all find comfort

in knowing that a Savior never gives up on anyone and we are not to give up on anyone! The Samaritans, prostitutes, and tax collectors we un-righteous according to the Pharisees but, the good news that the Savior has determined is that all of creation belongs to the Father and none shall perish.

In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 18:14 (NLT)

Matthew 25:46

This is the most often cited passage to enforce the teaching that punishment has no end. When they translated Matthew 25:46 the translators did not use eternal in the sense of never ending. This is because the Greeks (the original language of the manuscripts) knew the meaning of Aion (age abiding) denotes temporal correction.

And these shall go away to punishment age-during, but the righteous to life age-during. Matthew 25:46 (YLT)

If God created the world, (and He did) then we are all His children. God never created a fire to burn up His family. It never came to His mind (Jeremiah 7:31). God refines all His beloved creation by allowing every soul to progress by living in an imperfect world. How can we learn forgiveness if no one offends us? How can we grant mercy if we are not challenged? What about compassion if not tested. Those in this life who are willing, will be purified as fire test gold. Job is the best example, and he came shining through. So did Paul, David and Moses. In spite of their imperfections. Our purpose on earth is to learn to love. Earth may be the Yale of the Universe.

Questions to consider if Universalism is not true:

- Why does God stress the importance of forgiveness, if He doesn't forgive everyone?
- Why does God stress patience, kindness and compassion if He tosses people into an unending hell?
- Why would God perpetuate death, suffering and evil when He says it will be no more (come to an end)?

*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;
and death shall be no more, neither shall there be
anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain
any more, for the old conditions and the former
order of things have passed away.*

Revelation 21:4 (AMP)

The Early Christian Church

In the first five centuries of the Early Church there were six theological schools: --First four taught temporal correction (Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, and Edessa). One, in Ephesus taught

conditional immortality. (Annihilation). Last but not least, Carthage, taught Eternal Torment.¹

Eternal Torment is but one view of the early church (also was in the minority view). One's background will determine how you view scripture. It is very significant that the most violent society at the time taught eternal torment. It is also very enlightening to learn that the Greek Christian leaders, whose native language was Greek knew that *aion* the original word for eternal did not always mean

¹ Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1908, Vol. 12 pg. 96.

for infinity. What has happened as times passes? We tend to move farther away from the original.

It is essential to look at the Gospels. When Christ focused on *gehenna* (hell), it was directed toward the believers.

This is so important, the believers were warned about severe punishment, while those outside the confines of religion were welcomed by Christ! Jesus was a friend to the outcasts, and the religious leaders could not comprehend how wide and far God's love, Grace and Mercy extended to even the sinners! Jesus was kind to prostitutes, and the "unrighteous" while the believers of the one true God shunned them as insignificant and undeserving of the Kingdom of God. Another example is

found in the story of the prodigal. The brother was furious when God welcomed the prodigal due to his unfaithfulness to their father! Most will relate with the prodigal, but actually, many who are professed believers might be closer to the furious brother. God isn't going to limit His love only for the righteous believers. Christ in fact stated He came for the sick, the sinners and the unrighteous.

When Jesus heard this, He told them, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick does need one. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners. Mark 2:17 (HCSB)

Some Key principles taught by Christ when speaking to believers:

- **Believing does not guarantee you are prepared to live in The Kingdom of Heaven.**

Then Jesus explained his meaning: "I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. Matt 21:31(NLT)

- **Professing with the mouth *does not* indicate a good heart.**

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Mark 7:6 (NLT)

Having a faith that lacks empathy and concern for others, is the result of being self-centered instead of being love centered. This is a serious problem that is not going to be looked over because you simply believe Jesus died and rose from the dead. Jesus emphasized deeds of caring for others; those on the left were casting out demons in His name! The verse below is being spoken to believers; who in fact believed in Jesus.

*Then they also [in their turn] will answer, Lord,
when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a
stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not
minister to You?*

Matthew 25:44 (AMP)

Salvation *is not* determined by:

1. Church Membership
2. Baptism or Confirmation
3. Lip Service (profession)
4. Heritage (religious upbringing)
5. Position in life
6. Belief in God
7. Knowledge of the Bible

It has been determined by God, who sent a Savior. Many people live in such a way that they are in fact following Christ and may never had access to a bible.

And Peter opened his mouth and said: Most certainly and thoroughly I now perceive and understand that God shows no partiality and is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, he who venerates and has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him and sure of being received and welcomed [by Him]. Acts 10:34-35 (AMP)

Those who support the annihilation model use the following verses to object to the Universal Restoration model.

Objection: 1

The wicked will be destroyed from Job 21:30?

Reply: Job's afflictions are not being used to be relevant to plan of Salvation. If anything, Job is being refined by the Lord as 1 Peter Chapter 1:7 teaches that our sufferings and afflictions lead to purity of heart. As fire purifies gold.

Objection: 2

The fire and wrath will destroy the wicked from Psalms 21:9.

Reply: David is praying for his enemies to be destroyed.

This is similar to our prayers, when we are having personal wars. David's prayers are not teaching annihilation; David's prayer is a human experience we all can relate too.

Objection: 3

From Isaiah 47:14 the wicked will be stubble?

Reply: The context is rebuke for turning to idols. Sorcery is useless as stubble. Idols of stone don't help anyone. All idols are annihilated.

Objection: 4

From Isaiah 66:24 the fire will not be quenched and the worm won't die.

Reply: The previous verse (23) speaks of Restoration. All of mankind will worship the Lord. Verse 24 Speaks of judgment. All people will be held accountable for the life they lived while on earth. The language denotes that judgment has been determined and is unstoppable.

The work of each [one] will become [plainly, openly] known (shown for what it is); for the day [of Christ] will disclose and declare it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test and critically appraise the

character and worth of the work each person has done. 1

Corinthians 3:12 (AMP)

Objection: 5

From Malachi 4:1 there will be no trace of the wicked?

Not a root or a branch?

Reply: Evil will be removed from the earth, in the final Restoration, we will see love rule. The old order of things will be removed by the root and branch, in the new world there will be no trace of corruption.

Objection: 6

From Matthew 10:28 “fear God who can destroy the body and the soul”.

Reply: This goes in hand and hand with other passages that teach to not concern yourself with what people 'think', but rather concern ourselves with what God 'thinks' because He is the only righteous judge. This is an encouragement to live by Christ's principles and not be people pleasers, but God pleasers.

Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a

bond servant of Christ (the Messiah). Galatians

1:10 (AMP)

Objection: 7

From Matthew 25:41 the fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.

Reply: Universal Restoration does not deny some will suffer loss. Universal Restoration does differ on the duration, purpose and degree of punishment. Unlike Eternal Hell or Annihilation, the Universalist believes punishment is never cruel or unkind. It is reforming and medicinal. As a doctor would help the sick or a parent

would lovingly correct a child. The purpose is to cure and heal.

Objection: 8

From John 3:16 those will perish who do not believe?

Reply: We are preparing for ourselves now, for those who believe, are in a *condition of everlasting life*. Those who are perishing now on earth, perish for lack of knowledge.

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you [the priestly nation] have rejected
knowledge, I will also reject you that you shall be*

*no priest to Me; seeing you have forgotten the law
of your God, I will also forget your children.*

Hosea 4:6 (AMP)

**The great news is all men; all nations will come to
know the Lord.**

*And it will nevermore be necessary for each one to teach
his neighbor and his fellow citizen or each one his
brother, saying, know (perceive, have knowledge of, and
get acquainted by experience with) the Lord, for all will
know Me, from the smallest to the greatest of them.*

Hebrews 8:11 (AMP)

Objection: 9

Those who do evil will be damned for all eternity.

Reply: We all will have to account for the lives we lead. It does not mean all will be eternally lost, because Christ came to remedy the problem. No one is excluded, all will come to know the Lord see Hebrews 8:11.

In Him we have redemption (deliverance and salvation) through His blood, the remission (forgiveness) of our offenses (shortcomings and trespasses), in accordance with the riches and the and the generosity of His gracious favor.

Ephesians 1:7 (AMP)

Objection: 10

It is taught in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that God will destroy the wicked.

Reply: To destroy and bring destruction can have more than one meaning. When God restores everything, and everyone, the old nature will be destroyed, the old order will be removed, and wickedness will be gone forever

Example: I came home a few days ago and my cats destroyed my chair. It didn't cease to exist, but it is changed. The consuming fire of God is going to rid all

impurities. Like radiation destroys cancer (restoring the health). The process is painful, while healing. Adam brought death to all, but Christ brought life and justification to all Men! All accomplished within the fullness of time.

*[He planned] for the maturity of the times and the climax of the ages **to unify all things** and head them up and consummate them in Christ, [both] things in heaven and things on the earth.*

Ephesians 1:10 (AMP)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (HCSB)

1. **"Can you show me any instance where 'second chances' are given to people after they die? This is not a main stream theology nor has it been the position of the Church going back to the time of Christ. It is a new invention, and therefore requires something stronger than repeating "God gives second chances".**

Reply: Mercy triumphs over judgment! James 2:13

Christ preached to the souls in Sheol. (See 1 Peter 3:19, 4:6).

2. **The scripture is clear: Hebrews 9: 27 as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:**

Reply: It must always be kept in mind that Hebrews 9:27 does not say that when a lost person dies, they go to hell. It simply says everyone dies once and after that they are judged (period). We will all give an account of our life here on earth.

3. **The entire point of preaching the Gospel to the lost is because they will have no second chance after they die. Otherwise, the focus of the Gospel would be on living well, since preaching the Gospel would be absolutely irrelevant since everyone would have to believe after death.**

Reply: It is impossible for human beings on this side of life to know with any certainty what awaits anyone after physical death. Our commission is not to save people, but to love people. It is finished, at the cross.

4. **The Universalist position is simply not logical when faced with the mandate to preach the Gospel and the constant reminders that only through Christ is there salvation. If salvation were possible after death, the Gospel would have been more of a Buddha message.**

Reply: The same is true about the eternal punishment model, it is not 'logical' to allow anyone, even your enemies to wither and scream in torment for *ALL eternity*. We have laws in the United States of America preventing such cruelty to inmates on death row. If

God is more kind, merciful and compassionate than human beings, it is completely reasonable to believe that He continues to reach out to everyone. We have many obstacles in this life, and a God full of mercy will help us all overcome our ignorance and limitations.

5. **As for 1 Peter 4:6, Matthew Henry explains it thusly: "Some understand this difficult place thus: For this cause was the Gospel preached to all the faithful of old, who are now dead in Christ, that thereby they might be taught and encouraged to bear the unrighteous judgments and persecutions which the rage of men put upon them in the flesh,**

but might live in the Spirit unto God.

Reply: Matthew Henry had an opinion, just like many other commentators. Commentators like Matthew Henry (or me) are fallible human beings. Should faith be placed in God's Character or commentaries?

- 6. I would like it if you would address the scriptures that state that Satan and his false prophet will burn forever in the lake of fire, and that those not found in the book of Life will also burn there forever. I would also like it if you would address the scripture that states that their "worm dieth**

**not" in the fire that will "burn forever", as
described by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.**

Reply: In Isaiah 34:10, for example, says that the smoke of Edom's destruction will ascend up forever and ever - it will not be quenched night and day. Figures of speech such as "unquenchable fire" are used in the Bible to *describe a process that is unstoppable and irreversible*. It is important to remember that 'fire' in the Bible denotes purification, and judgment. God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is an extremely difficult book to comprehend even for the most highly educated scholar. Revelation has many interpretations, and it is impossible to define and shape theology from this book alone. We must take scripture as a whole, and compare all scripture.

The model of Eschatology will shape how you view judgment, God and eternity. The book of Revelation is the most misunderstood and abused book of the Bible. There are many that form their entire system of theology on this one book! Revelation is an important part of biblical history, but it is impossible to assert that any one person,

sect, or theology is one hundred percent accurate.

Focusing just on this one book causes many to remain spiritual infants their entire life. No one knows the exact events of the future.

So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual up building (edification and development) of one another. Romans 14:19 (AMP)

The Book of Life

I [also] saw the dead, great and small; they stood before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is [the Book] of

life. And the dead were judged (sentenced) by what they had done [their whole way of feeling and acting, their aims and endeavors] in accordance with what was recorded in the books.

Revelation 2:12 (AMP)

Moses was being called to serve God by leading the Israelites to the Promised Land but Moses was not interested. Moses murdered a man and fled into the wilderness for forty years. You would assume that when Moses saw the burning bush and God revealed His plan, Moses should have been thankful he was going to be saved from hell. But instead of being happy *Moses asked to be removed from the Book of Life* (see Exodus 32:32).

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that *the Book of Life* not a list of who is going to be saved from hell, otherwise Moses would not request to be removed from it. It appears to be a reference to the chosen to serve God. Moses asked several times to get someone else to lead the Israelites; he was hesitant to his calling. According to the majority of views, *the Book of Life* is a registry of the saved. But if this is true, Moses would not ask to be removed. It does however, support that those in the book of life were called to serve God. Philippians further supports this interpretation. Paul is asking for the Philippians to come along and teach the message of the Gospel.

And I exhort you too, [my] genuine yokefellow, help these [two women to keep on cooperating], for they have toiled along with me in [the spreading of] the good news (the Gospel), as have Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life.

Philippians 4:3 (AMP)

The elect and the redeemed at two different terms used in the scripture. The elect is those called and anointed by God: David, Paul, Peter, Moses, are called to serve people. Those who are redeemed are the entire world. Notice that last verse implies fellow workers are in the book of life due to their calling and election. It however does not express that those who are not in the book have no chance

of being reconciled to their creator. Moses tried to refuse his duty and asked to be removed, but he did not fear this jeopardized his eternal destiny.

The Lake of fire

Then the devil who had led them astray [deceiving and seducing them] was hurled into the fiery lake of burning brimstone, where the beast and false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (through the ages of the ages). Revelation 21:10 (AMP)

The lake of fire can be viewed from three different points of view. For the conservative Universalist, it represents a divine purging, for an annihilationist it is viewed as the eradication of the entire person while the view of eternal hell views the literal fire with torment and pain forever. If the "lake of fire" is literal in the sense of turning created beings into ashes or living in endless pain for eternity, where is the good news? The question remains, does this sound like an all-knowing, all-powerful God? The "lake of fire" is mentioned only in the book of Revelation. Fire is used in many other books both in the Old and the New Testament. If the fate of the majority of creation ends up in a lake of fire why create at all; why not warn people in the first chapter of Genesis.

What about Brimstone and with burning sulfur? A doctor at the Institute for Traditional Medicine, Portland, Oregon wrote that sulfur is the most prevalent element in the human body and essential to life. Sulfur is used for medicinal purposes in times past and today. Sulfur was used by the Greeks to cure disease. Today, sulfur is used to make antibiotics. We must look upon God as the Great Physician who heals and transforms. Who has promised restoration for the entire creation. We must abandon the idea that God is angry and vengeful. God isn't out to get anyone, but is looking to cure the universe of rebellion and destruction. It is also very possible that those who are in such a condition of rebellion experience God as a lake of fire, while they are being transformed. Transformation

from a severe disease will cause a certain degree of pain and loss. The end result is going to be beauty rising up from the ashes.

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined and will test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will hear and answer them. I will say, it is My people; and they will say, The Lord is my God. Zachariah 13:9 (NLT)

The Second Death

Then death and Hades (the state of death or disembodied existence) were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Rev. 20:14

The second death is mentioned only in the book of Revelation. To the annihilationist the second death is extinction. The second death is a little tricky, it could support that the second death is the death of the old nature (Col 3:8, Rom 7:5) inherited by Adam. For those who have allowed the new nature to change them, the second

death has no power, for the old has passed away, they have been re-born. It could also support the death of death itself, as old things will pass away, where we will no longer have sorrow, suffering or death!

We are all joined to the soul of God. At Paul's conversion Christ reveals that the persecutions of others affect Him.

Now as he traveled on, he came near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me [harassing, troubling, and molesting Me]? Acts 3-4 (AMP)

In the Gospel's, Christ encourages everyone to help others and when we do it is as if we are helping Christ.

And when did we see You sick or in prison and came to visit You? And the King will reply to them, Truly I tell you, in so far as you did it for one of the least in the estimation of men] of these My brethren, you did it for Me.

Matthew 25:39-40 (AMP)

In this way, it can be concluded that every soul is joined to the soul of God. How could God destroy and annihilate a part of Himself. Male and female are created in His image. How could God destroy His pride and joy, the beloved creation? To eradicate an individual would be to destroy a part of God. How can we accept the annihilation of any

wicked person? It would bring far more glory to God to transform the most notorious wicked being into beauty and love. When we think of Hitler being transformed into a new creation, it is a far more praise worthy than extermination. The whole universe will witness the transformation of all creation. This is the song every creature in heaven and earth will sing.

And I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth [in Hades, the place of departed spirits] and on the sea and all that is in it, crying out together, To Him Who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb be ascribed the blessing and the honor and the majesty (glory, splendor) and the power (might and

dominion) forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities)! Revelation 5:13 (Amp)

Chapter 4: Support for Restoration

Until we see every human being as equal and full of worth, we will continue to have wars, and destruction.

One act of kindness can change a life. One person can change the world with simple acts of kindness.

John Murray born in 1741 was considered the first American Universalist preacher. He was raised as a Calvinist but always had difficulty believing salvation was limited to only a few. When he came to America, he met a farmer who built a church for a specific preacher who did

not teach eternal punishment. John Murray was the first to preach Universal Restoration in America.

Today, very few churches teach what the early Universalist church taught through scripture. When we examine scripture, it isn't difficult to see the possibility of a final Restoration of all people.

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

Why would God create billions of people knowing they will spend eternity in hell?

1. The Calvinist needs to answer why God would create so many people knowing He's 'elected' them for hell.
2. The Armenians (free will) needs to answer why God would create so many people knowing that so many of them would reject Him and thus spend eternity in hell.

The Universal Restoration Answer:

God will remove all wickedness without the necessity for eternal extermination or eternal hell. Everyone will be transformed into the image they were created, the image of God. Therefore, it is the wickedness that will be removed. When Christ was on earth, He healed many and helped many damaged people become whole. The entire world needs love to heal.

Serial Killer Aileen was damaged to a point that only God's love could heal her from all the abuse she had as a child. The justice system could see only her crimes, but God saw her before she was abused. She was executed in 2002. I believe she will be restored to her former state of

perfection in the new world. All that God creates is good, even when we only see imperfect people. Pure divine love has lasting effects. Let us hold out for more hope, that *all damaged souls will respond to the love of God. Amen.*

The damage people enforced on Aileen and others can be such an extreme degree that only God alone truly understands how to reverse the effects. Isn't it better to hold out for everyone's recovery to wholeness (salvation)? I would imagine God's love for all serial killers will be a trillion times greater than my imperfect love. How many people live in hopeless situations they cannot escape?

Scripture can support an Adventist, Catholic or Baptist. We decide who best represents our spiritual theories. Again, we must ask do they line up with human character or divine love and compassion. God has an incredible amount of love for the world. A popular TV series ‘Extreme Makeover’ home restoration expert Ty Pennington, gives people a second chance when their home is remodeled. How difficult is it to accept that the God of the universe can give every individual an extreme makeover! Have we succumbed to having more faith in a TV personality than the Father of the universe?

And He who is seated on the throne said, See! I make all things new. Also, He said, Record this,

for these sayings are faithful (accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy) and true (genuine). Revelation 21:5 (AMP)

Nature of God

But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, GENTLENESS (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law {that can bring a charge}. Galatians 5:22-23 (AMP)

Our traditions have taught the importance of human will, while neglecting God's will to restore everyone and everything. How powerless have we been taught God is? When does divine love end? When does God's patience end? When does hope end? Mercy and Grace lasts forever, because it is God's nature and character. He is the same today, tomorrow and forever. The creator of the world has mercy while we are alive, and has mercy when we physically die.

He is the Savior who continues to rescue all people from their own deceptions. He is the Savior who rescues and

restores all who are in pain mentally, physically and spiritually.

I will heal their apostasy;

I will freely love them,

for My anger will have turned from him.

Hosea 14:4 (HCSB)

In Mark chapter 10 verses 20-31, A rich young ruler asks Jesus what He must do to be saved. Notice Jesus didn't say just place your faith in me and you will be saved. No, first Jesus points to the Ten Commandments, and the young rich man states he has kept all the commandments

since birth. Next Jesus tells him he must sell all he owns to come follow Him, and the rich man walked away very sad for he loved possessions more than God. While Jesus was repeating the story, His disciples remarked that it was impossible for anyone to be saved. Christ next statement is revolutionary! He states:

*With people it is impossible, but not with God; for **all things are possible with God.*** Mark 10:27 (AMP)

It is easy to fall into the mindset that there is no hope for anyone, because we tend to attribute human weakness with God. We place our human characteristics onto God.

- Our lack of love
- Our lack of mercy
- Our own lack of patience

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:9 (AMP)

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never gives up on anyone! Everyone is worthy of love and forgiveness!

*No one will be able to stand against you as long
as you live. For I will be with you as I was with
Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. Joshua
1:5 (NLT)*

Death does not end our connection to God He continues to
reach out to people in prison. God is everywhere.

I can never escape from your Spirit!

I can never get away from your presence!"

Psalm 139:7 (NLT)

And He will not rest until every last sheep is home safe
and healed by His Grace. How we build our theological

foundation determines how we view scripture. The amount of human error is covered by His Grace!

*And my God will liberally supply (fill to the full)
your every need according to His riches in glory
in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 (AMP)*

God will never leave or forsake anyone, He is everywhere. He loves the world, His world, and all people in the world will return to peace, and harmony. God accomplishes what men cannot. God shows no favoritism.

*He does great things too marvelous to understand.
He performs countless miracles. Job 5:9 (NLT)*

He was severe with those who didn't believe, but it was specifically to the religious leaders who witnessed His miracles with a blind eye. While Jesus healed the blind and set free the demon possessed, it was the religious leaders who mocked and insulted Him. They made plans for Christ to be executed.

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were all the while seeking to arrest [Jesus] by secrecy and deceit and put [Him] to death. Mark 14:1 (AMP)

There are degrees of accountability. The accountability of those living who witnessed Christ and His miracles, have

a higher degree of responsibility than those who receive the information two thousand years later. Many in this generation (and in the past) are still trying to figure out who teaches truth. Is it the Catholic Church, Protestants, Islam or Evolution?

Laws of God

If indeed you [really] fulfill the royal Law in accordance with the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as [you love] yourself, you do well.

James 2:8 (AMP)

According to exclusive teachings, all hope of salvation is lost at the moment of death. This is irrational to accept when God requires the following from unrighteous people.

1. We are to always forgive those who offend us.

~Matthew 6:12

2. Bless those who persecute us.

~ Luke 6:28

3. Love those who hate us.

~ Luke 6:35

4. Pray for our enemies.

~ Matthew 5:44

5. Keep no record of wrongs committed against us.

~1 Corinthians 13:5

6. Extend Mercy to those who offend us.

~ Matthew 5:7

7. Never let anger control us.

~ Eph 4:27

8. Be kind to everyone.

~ Eph 4:32

9. Visit those who are in prison.

~Matt 25:36

10. Love Unconditionally.

~2 Tim 4:16

God is holy and cannot break His own mandates and laws.

God does not create to destroy, nor did He create only to allow suffering for all eternity.

Will God forgive those who offend Him?

(Yes).

Will God bless those who persecute Him?

(Yes).

Will He pray for His Enemies?

(Yes).

Will He love those who hate Him?

(Yes).

Will He accuse anyone of their wrong for eternity?

(No)

Will He extend mercy to all?

(Yes).

Will God be kind to all?

(Yes).

Will God be angry for all eternity?

(No)

Will God visit those who are in prison?

(Living in darkness)?

(Yes).

Will God love unconditionally?

(Yes).

Can God break His laws and statutes? Does He lower His standards while expecting more from fallible humans?

Universal Restoration supports the mandates and law of God like no other theology. It is extremely inconsistent to accept that the kindness and compassion of God is extinguished at the time of death.

Promises of God

God promised to bring healing and Restoration into the world. This is great news the Savior provides hope for all people. Christ did this for us all. Not just the professing Christian, or Jewish nation, but all of humanity!

Ephesians 2:4 teaches:

*But God--so rich is He in His mercy! Because of
and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful
and intense love with which He loved us.*

Ephesians 3 verse 14-15 states that every family will be
blessed by Grace.

*For this reason [seeing the greatness of this plan
by which you are built together in Christ], I bow
my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, For whom **every family in heaven and on
earth is named** [that Father from Whom all
fatherhood takes its title and derives its name].*

(AMP)

Ephesians Chapter 3 Verse 19 promises that Christ is going to surpass all expectations.

For this reason {seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ}, I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (AMP)

Ephesians Chapter 4 verses 9-10 speak of the entire universe being filled with Christ.

He who descended is the [very] same as He Who also has ascended high above all the heavens, that

He [His presence] might fill all things (the whole universe, from the lowest to the highest). (AMP)

The Apostle Paul mentions seven times in the book of Ephesians the mystery of God's plan, (bringing to completion) the salvation of His entire creation.

1. Ephesians 1:9 (AMP)

Making known to us the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose). [And it is this:] In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He had previously purposed and set forth in Him.

2. Ephesians 3:3 (AMP)

*[And] that the mystery (secret) was made known
to me and I was allowed to comprehend it by
direct revelation, as I already briefly wrote you.*

3. Ephesians 3:4 (AMP)

*When you read this, you can understand my
insight into the mystery of Christ.*

4. Ephesians 3:5 (AMP)

[This mystery] was never disclosed to human beings in past generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles (consecrated messengers) and prophets by the [Holy] Spirit.

5. Ephesians 3:9 (AMP)

Also, to enlighten all men and make plain to them what is the plan [regarding the Gentiles and providing for the salvation of all men] of

the mystery kept hidden through the ages and concealed until now in [the mind of] God Who

created all things by Christ Jesus.

6. Ephesians 5:32 (AMP)

*This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning
[the relation of] Christ and the church.*

7. Ephesians 6:19 (AMP)

*And [pray] also for me, that [freedom of]
utterance may be given me, that I may open my
mouth to proclaim boldly the mystery of the good
news (the Gospel).*

If we think that God extends not one ounce of mercy,
kindness or compassion when a human heart stop beating,
what would cause anyone to extend compassion to anyone
we think is hopeless case? No one is beyond God's reach.

*O give thanks to the God of gods, for His mercy
and loving-kindness endure forever. Psalm 136:2*
(AMP)

The Will of God

- To extend Mercy to all. (Romans 11:32)
- Unify all things. (1 Cor 15:28)

- Consummate all things in heaven and earth in Christ. (Eph 1:10)
- Obtain our inheritance. (Eph 3:6)
- He planned, foreordained, appointed, and designed the Victory of His plan (will and desire to save everyone). (Romans 9:8)

Will God be defeated by His creation? By all means no! He works out everything in accordance by His will! What was the will of Jesus in the Gospels? To heal the sick (unrighteous) see Mark 2:17.

Christ was rejected by those in authority because they didn't accept or understand His love and compassion. Their focus was on the 'letter of the law'. They lost focus on the greatest commandments of all: "to love your neighbor as you love yourself". There is no room here to exclude anyone because of their sin, culture, religious background, or the nation of their birth. A common response is that it is 'love' to tell someone of another group they will be going to hell for rejecting Jesus, but Jesus only spoke this statement to the religious leaders. Do we really expect that fallible human beings are capable of giving an unaltered and pure message two thousand years later?

He rebuked anyone who felt they were righteous in God's eyes. An example is in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 18 verses 9-14. Humans are never to judge or condemn.

And then a certain lawyer arose to try (test, tempt) Him, saying, Teacher, what am I to do to inherit everlasting life [that is, to partake of eternal salvation in the Messiah's kingdom]? Jesus said to him, what is written in the Law? How do you read it? And he replied, you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with your entire mind;

and your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus said to him, you have answered correctly; do this, and you will live [enjoy active, blessed, endless life in the kingdom of God]. He answered, the one who showed pity and mercy to him. And Jesus said to him, Go and do likewise. Luke 10:25-37 (AMP)

Wisdom of God

But God made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. With his own understanding he stretched out the heavens. Jeremiah 10:12 (NLT)

Isn't it time that faith be practiced in the sense that love and grace will exceed human expectations? David who committed adultery and murdered a man was a man after Gods own heart. How can we ignore Peter who denied he ever knew Christ not once, not twice but three times. Paul encountered Christ without seeking Him, while on the road to Damascus not through the desire or will of but of the wisdom and desire of God. God continues to surprise and revolutionize the thinking of human beings. This is a pattern clearly set out of countless stories we read. When we consider that 'He failed thee not', how can any be forgotten because of human will or ignorance?

For in Gods wisdom, He reached Paul the persecutor,
David the adulterer and Peter the denier, Mary the
prostitute, the prodigal son, and the corrupt tax collectors.
It seemed strange to Job and his peers that God would
allow calamity to come to such a righteous and faithful
servant such as Job. But when Job questions God, we
learn that God does not always act according to our ways,
but according to His wisdom.

*God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great
things that we cannot comprehend. Job 37:5 (HCSB)*

Progressive Christianity

Progressive Christianity is an ideology that emphasizes building relationships by our differences. Christ, accepted lepers and prostitutes and any who did not fit in with the religious community Christ wanted to heal the outcast, and rebuked the rigid lack of love for the religiously minded. Christ who often rebuked the very religiously minded for their limitations on caring for those outside their group.

The example of the parable in Luke displays that those who appear knowledgeable of God, are likely to be

mistaken by their own biases. This is important for people of all faiths to recognize that humility before God is an important essential, not the brand of dogma.

Jewish tradition states that you cannot judge others unless you have walked in their shoes. Christ taught never to judge others actions, but to judge your own. In our world, the justice system, medical system and prison systems do not cure people all the time. Those who sit in jail need God's love. Many have never had any direction or felt worthy enough to be loved. When face to face with God, the great physician, I believe they (as all people) will be instantly healed! God, who is a Savior by His nature and character, can provide complete transformation. Everyone

will become a new creation, everyone who has been altered and distorted by this world. Since we live in an altered world, God does not look down upon the world in anger or wrath. He is sympathetic, kind and compassionate, He understands every human weakness. The world is no longer under the condemnation of the law, but is under the covenant of Grace. It is time we let this really sink into our minds and hearts. When we realize that God offers us Grace, we will begin to truly live by grace.

Western culture is obsessed with vengeance and violence. Movies have influenced us a great deal, (too many movies

such as: Clint Eastwood and the Terminator). This may be one of the reasons it is taking so long to correctly divide scripture. Secretly, many like the idea of hell. God is going to surpass the results of the world justice system, medical wards and prisons. God will cure mankind's dilemma. Meet Dr. Jesus the cure of all worldly sorrows.

God's will is never prevented by human ignorance, will or power.

I know that You can do all things, and that no thought or purpose of Yours can be restrained or thwarted. Job 42:2 (AMP)

God desires all to be saved

Who wishes all men to be saved and [increasingly] to perceive and recognize and discern and know precisely and correctly the [divine] Truth? 1 Tim 2:4 (AMP)

Can we have faith that God is going to surpass our expectations? YES!

*For the grace of God (His unmerited favor and blessing) has come forward (appeared) for **the deliverance from sin and the eternal salvation for all mankind.***

Titus 2:11(AMP)

It is true; we can trust that God has the wisdom and power to accomplish what men deem impossible.

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

Romans 11:33(AMP)

God our Father is for us, and desires a relationship of reconciliation for all lost sheep and all prodigals.

For whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3: 12 (AMP)

God is the parent of everyone. He is indeed the creator of the whole world. God is compassionate and merciful and His love endures forever: this promise is *for all*. Human beings have nothing to do with salvation; it was secured by Christ, by God's will. We continually see God the Father as someone we can cry out to, and His ears are attentive to our pleas, and He will act when it is according to His will.

At other times when God is silent, He is not acting as a cruel parent, but allows for us to learn without smothering us as spoiled children. This life is tough, and Christ reminded us several times in the Gospels that we will go

through many trials. Our Father in heaven is rooting for us, because He knows start to finish, we are victorious!

He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but because of His own pity and mercy, by [the] cleansing [bath] of the new birth (regeneration) and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 (AMP)

Foundation of Universal Restoration

“Christ is Savior of the World”. John 1:29

1. God's love surpasses human understanding.

That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself].

Ephesians 3:19 (AMP)

2. Mercy, Grace, Love endures forever.

For God has consigned (penned up) all men to disobedience, only that He may have mercy on them all [alike]. Romans 11:32 (AMP)

3. Wickedness will be cured.

*Which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all [for in that body lives the full measure of Him who makes everything COMPLETE and **Who fills everything everywhere with Himself**].*

Ephesians 1:23 (AMP)

4. Every Knee will ' willingly ' profess and bow in worship to Christ.

And every tongue [frankly and openly] confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father.

Philippians 2:11 (AMP)

5. God is not willing that any perish.

Just so it is not the will of My Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost and perish. Matthew 18:14 (AMP)

**6. ALL Nations will be reconciled, healed,
transformed, and restored back to their former Glory.**

And God purposed that through (by the service, the intervention of) Him [the Son] all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him, [the Father] made peace by means of the blood of His cross.

Colossians 1:20 (AMP)

7. Even Sodom will be restored. To her former Glory!

But someday I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and Samaria, and I will restore you, too. Ezekiel 16:53 (NLT)

8. All of Israel will be saved!

And so, all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. Romans 11:26 (NLT)

9. Sin is no longer held against anyone.

And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sin. Hebrews 8:12 (NLT)

10. The debt has been paid, the books have been cleared, and the only debt that remains is to walk in love.

Who gave Himself as a ransom for all [people, a fact that was] attested to at the right and proper time. 1 Timothy 2:6 (AMP)

Keep out of debt and owe no man anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor [who practices loving others]

has fulfilled the Law [relating to one's fellowmen, meeting all its requirements].

Romans 13:8 (AMP)

Have you ever given up, only to be brought back to life by the love of a caring human being? Imagine how much

more Divine love and compassion will change all people who have been beaten up by this world.

And I, if and when I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw and attract all men [Gentiles as well as Jews] to myself.

John 12:32 (AMP)

Judgment Starts with the body of Christ

For it is the time [destined] for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not respect or believe or obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17 Amp

Judgment starts with the household of God, we have a lot of cleaning up to do, and we need to remove the huge log out of our own eye. This means we must stop judging those outside the faith, and judge our own sin. Now, many who hear universal restoration (universalism) assume that this is a license to sin all you want for in the end you will be 'saved', but they are missing the point.

Universalism teaches that we must live our life by living in the light and the salt of the earth. As believers we are focusing our efforts on Christ, and living by His commands to help those who are still entangled in their rebellion or ignorance. Believers in the body of Christ are

accountable for the lives they lead. In other words, there is no free pass. To enter into the Kingdom, we are required to obey and walk in the principles of Christ our Lord. If we fall back into obeying the sinful nature, we will be purified by the fire of God. What that entail is yet to be fully known, but we cannot assume we are above the law and principles given to us by our Lord and Savior.

For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders (non-believers)? Do you not judge those who are within the church [to protect the church as the situation requires]?

1 Corinthians 5:12 (AMP)

Let us not be deceived by confessing with our mouth, yet denying Christ by our actions. And let us not be naïve in our thinking that we don't have an issue among the body of believers. We question why the world laughs at our faith? We have a lot of household cleaning to do.

Christians high divorce rates outnumber those outside the faith or those who identify as non-theists.

And we know that judgment and fire represent the purging away of the ugliness that cause us to fall away from God's Holiness and purity. We want paradise, but we often refuse to abide by God's wisdom by living by the worldly standards and not the standards given to us by Christ our

Lord. We can't complain when we follow after the lusts of this world and then suffer the consequences. The moral of the story is turn to God now and allow Him to transform us to be fit for His Kingdom, rather than go through the painful process of the refining 'fire' of discipline.

Behold, how happy *and* fortunate is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise *or* reject the **discipline** of the Almighty [subjecting you to trial and suffering].

Job 5:17 (AMP)

Chapter 5: Sanctification and Salvation

Catholic Nun Saint Faustina wrote down many revelations in her diary *Divine Mercy*. In her writings she stresses the importance of acts of mercy through our prayers for the living and the dead. The Marians are also a Roman Catholic Congregation dedicated to praying for deceased souls who have yet to find peace. Evangelism is stressed within the Southern Baptist tradition. The fact is that many die without knowing the peace and salvation Christ won for the entire world. The world is not without hope,

according to the biblical belief that every knee will now and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord, eventually all will know Christ as their Savior. All accomplished by the will of the Father.

Chabad Judaism

Chabad teaches that those who are considered righteous by God will immediately enter the Gan Eden (heaven) after death. If you are not completely evil or wicked you will go through Gehenna the Jewish version of purgatory where you will be purified and made ready to enter Gan Eden. Like other sects of Judaism, Chabad does not focus

on an afterlife. Rather their focus is on this life and how you can best serve others. This is a great outlook since, regardless of your religion, no one knows with certainty what happens after death. According to some sages and Rabbis the longest time anyone can spend in Gehenna is twelve months. While Judaism does not recognize Christ as their Messiah, Judaism teaches Christ's principles that emphasize love and compassion.

If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true (faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself.

2 Timothy 2:13 (AMP)

Protestants and Catholics

Protestants and Catholics both agree the duration of hell for a non-believer is endless punishment. They differ on the doctrine of purgatory. For a Catholic, only the Saints are purified upon death and are made complete for heaven but, the majority of people still require a process of purging. For the Protestant everything was finished at Calvary. Keep in mind that the battle between the old nature is strong, (Galatians Chapter 5) and must be tamed by obeying our new nature. Protestants believe that sanctification will be completed before death. Catholics

recognize that sanctification is a lifelong process that may not be completed by death. Even among evangelicals there is disagreement. In the Pentecostal faith, sanctification and salvation can be lost forever; this leaves a believer without any security that Christ has saved them; since they are required to maintain their salvation by their own works.

But if it is by grace (His unmerited favor and graciousness), it is no longer conditioned on works or anything men have done. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace [it would be meaningless].

Romans 11:6 (AMP)

**Salvation is secure by the work of Christ; however,
sanctification is a work for all who have placed their
faith in Christ.**

If salvation is not a ‘work’ of human ability, how can it be lost when Christ has secured salvation for the world? It is my contention, as a Universalist, that sanctification can be lost, but the process WILL be made complete without losing one’s salvation. Salvation is a onetime event, because Christ secured salvation with His very own blood.

*He went once for all into the [Holy of] Holies [of heaven],
not by virtue of the blood of goats and calves [by which to
make reconciliation between God and man], but His own*

*blood, having found and secured a complete redemption
(an everlasting release for us). Hebrews 9:12 (AMP)*

Working out salvation is a daily task, not in the sense of staying saved but working hand in hand with the light of God. His spirit will reveal all that prevents perfect and pure love from reigning in our hearts and mind. The process is life-long and God completes it from start to finish.

*And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He
Who began a good work in you will continue until the day
of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return],
developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing
it to full completion in you. Philippians 1:6 (AMP)*

Justification is a onetime event. This is completed by Christ alone. All people are justified by the blood of Christ, but all are not sanctified. Sanctification is a process that can be delayed by our unwillingness to allow the Spirit of God to work in our heart, mind and soul.

Sanctification is when we work with the spirit of God to bring our spiritual growth into completion. Being born again is like a light turning on. It's like walking into the same room, except this time you turn on the light, the light makes all the differences in seeing what can stay in the room and what must be changed.

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.

John 8:12 (NLT)

The eventual outcome for everyone is they will see the light and will have full knowledge of how every word, deed and action has shaped us individual actions.

Knowing this information will transform and sanctify.

Everyone, even a professing Christian has a sinful nature and at any point can turn to follow the old nature. It is a battle, one that can be won, when determined to yield to

the spirit daily. Walking down a church aisle, being baptized and being a church member is the beginning of a great journey, but sanctification is life-long and it takes commitment. Salvation is not attained by our works, but sanctification takes action and work on our part only by allowing the spirit of God to transform every part of our entire being.

*And may the God of peace Himself sanctify
you through and through [separate you from
profane things, make you pure and wholly
consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and*

*soul and body be preserved sound and
complete [and found] blameless at the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah).*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (AMP)

Salvation is secure for the world. Human ability has nothing to do with losing salvation; salvation cannot be maintained by our works. However, sanctification is made complete when we cooperate with the spirit of God. Like when we go to a wedding ceremony, we prepare and get ready. To be ready for a perfect world, we must live the best of our ability the royal law of love. For all the commandments are summed up in love.

Now just because someone has a belief in Jesus, does not necessarily mean you are following the spirit of Jesus.

There is a simple test to see which spirit it is you follow.

Many devoted religious people have placed their trust in being in the right church that teaches the right doctrine.

Many people have doctrines of men, but have no genuine love for others. Love must exceed and grow; we must learn to love others in the same way we love our very own family.

But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing. James 1:4 (AMP)

Orthodox and Anglicans

The Orthodox and Anglicans both pray for the dead, they both reject the Catholic Church's definition of purgatory. The Eastern Orthodox Church refrains from defining with assertion what happens during the intermediate state. John Wesley, founder of the United Methodist Church, was not against praying for the dead. However, the official statement of the Methodist Church does not teach purgatory or praying for the dead.

In the religion of Islam there is a temporal hell for sinning believers, however those who reject Allah will suffer for all eternity. Latter Day Saints practice baptism for the dead, which can be interpreted to be similar to the practice of praying for the dead.

*Clothe yourselves therefore, as God's own chosen ones
(His own picked representatives), [who are]
purified and holy and well-beloved [by God Himself, by
putting on behavior marked by] tenderhearted pity
and mercy, kind feeling, a lowly opinion of yourselves,
gentle ways, [and] patience [which is tireless and long-
suffering, and has the power to endure whatever comes,
with good temper]. Colossians 3:12 (AMP)*

Praying for Deceased

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.
Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.
Philippians 4:6 (NLT)*

According to Protestant theology there is no hope beyond this life. Praying for anyone after they die is out of the question. This theory was developed after the reformation. The reformers threw out the baby with the bath water (in my opinion). The intention of the reformers was to end some of the abusive practices related to praying for the dead. However, the practice of praying for the deceased loved ones is far from wrong. It is the most compassionate practice for all faithful believers.

For Christ died and lived again for this very
PURPOSE THAT He might be Lord both of the
dead and of the living. Romans 14:9 (AMP)

The assumption is to place human limitations on God.

Humans are not equipped to know what happens beyond the intermediate state. If God's ways are much higher than our own, it is biblical and reasonable that He restores and transforms people even after they physically die. Whether we see our loved ones on earth or if they have died, physical death is no obstacle for God. Why would it be? Scripture does not indicate that hope ends or God's love ends. Scripture promises that hope and love never ends.

*And so, faith, hope, love abide [faith--conviction
and belief respecting man's relation to God and
divine things; hope--joyful and confident
expectation of eternal salvation; love--true*

affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (AMP)

The practice of praying for our deceased loved ones is an expression of love and faith. For too long, hell has been used to control and manipulate people. While division is unfortunately the history of the church, there is a coming shift in our lifetime. The doors to discussion are slowly opening, and harmony is on the horizon. Perhaps unity will infiltrate every denomination. Unity can heal and

change our world. Division in the body of Christ has contributed to many ills in our world.

For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39 (AMP)

Kaddish Prayer

Prayers for the deceased is still practiced today among Chabad Judaism, (And other versions of Judaism). Should a Christian practice Kaddish of Prayer for the dead? Yes! It is a matter of following the love and compassion of the heart. The spirit of the message in Romans 14 is our God given freedom to love and worship as our conscience leads.

*And so, each of us shall give an account of himself
[give an answer in reference to judgment] to God.
Then let us no longer criticize and blame and pass
judgment on one another, but rather decide and*

*endeavor never to put a stumbling block or an
obstacle or a hindrance in the way of a brother.*

Romans 14:13-14 (AMP)

Therefore, let no one criticize anyone for loving others
and praying for their wellbeing. No harm can come from
praying.

Intercession

No one will be ready for God's Kingdom if they have not
prepared to live by the spirit of love. Prayer is an act of
praise and worship. When we pray, we become a partner

with God. We are acting as brothers and sisters in the family of humanity.

First of all, then, I admonish and urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered on behalf of all men. 1 Timothy 2:1 (AMP)

God can continue to help reach and minister to those who have passed from this world. There is nothing greedy or corrupt by caring for others. In fact, we are commanded to pray for those in prison, we must never cease our prayers for all people to be released from their pain and suffering. It has been documented by near death experiencers that God and His angels visit those who are in hell. God and His angels continue to pursue those trapped by their own

destructive barriers to gain what God has graciously given them, redemption. Redemption from the fall created by Adam and Eve, and the justification that was delivered as our eternal gift by Christ our Savior.

Jesus encouraged His disciples to always pray and never give up.

ALSO [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to turn coward (faint, lose heart, and give up).

Luke 18:1 (AMP)

Nothing can separate us from God's love, not even death. God grants more Mercy than we can conceive or comprehend. Hope is available and we must not give up on anyone, just as God never gives up He understands our condition. Love always paves the way, even in stubborn willful behavior. Good loving parents persevere and so does God. We can count on His love and grace to save us from our ignorance:

As children, we all learned a very basic song that Jesus loves us. If this is literally true, when would Jesus stop loving anyone? If our parents on earth know good things

to give their children, how much more will God give good things to those who are created in His image?

*I will recount the loving-kindnesses of the Lord
and the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, according
to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the
great goodness to the house of Israel, which He
has granted them according to His mercy and
according to the multitude of His loving-
kindnesses.*

Isaiah 63:7 (AMP)

Learning the mind of Christ will enable us to never give up on anyone.

So too the [Holy] Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance. Romans 8:26 (AMP)

When we are weak, and when life takes its toll, we simply are in the thoughts and prayers of our Savior. How comforting to know our Savior is with us and for us.

Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed. James 5:16 (AMP)

Who is without fault? Therefore, when we extend grace to one another we heal each other.

Be earnest and unwearied and steadfast in your prayer [life], being [both] alert and intent in [your praying] with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2 (AMP)

How much we have to look forward to when this age ends. Together we will live in a world of complete harmony. A

new world where death will no longer rain, hunger will no longer prevail, both in a spiritual and physical sense. The entire creation will be free from the bondage of sin.

But the end and culmination of all things has now come near; keep a Sound minded and self-restrained and alert therefore for [the practice of] prayer. 1 Peter 4:7 (AMP)

Praise God for His Mercy and Grace. May we never cease in our devotion, love and prayer! Never give up that your prayers are not heard, our prayers are welcomed by our Father, and it brings Him great joy to know that we love and care for one another.

Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty.

To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people).

Ephesians 6:18 (AMP)

Chapter 6: Influential Insights

When I began my journey, I had no idea where it would take me. Along the way, I came across many people who greatly inspired me. I never knew that so many people could experience the same thoughts across all denominational lines. In the vast array of different perspectives about God there is a ‘reason for the season’; we all get to the place we need to be exactly at the right time. And when that time arrives the divine creator will bring His beloved family into full unity. Let us all join together as we are one, made in the image of our Father.

We need one another; we can all teach each other how to grow in love.

So, God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (AMP)

Although it appears that much division still remains among Christian denominations, the reality is each has a different function within the body of Christ. I have learned so much from every denominational viewpoint.

Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, but each person is so unique they can share their devotion and love in many variations unique to our language of love. We all express love unique to whom we are and where we have

been. We need not fear our differences. We can embrace them! I rather enjoy how each person in the world has a different experience with God.

So, we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another [mutually dependent on one another].

Romans 12:25 (AMP)

Let us remain hopeful that eventually all people across every faith and denomination will come together to form a perfect and beautiful melody. Let us pray and hope that

the face of Christianity will reform and examine its heart and soul.

Let our light shine for all men, and spread the news of hope, peace and love for all. We can never fail when we live to bring hope, healing through love. Preaching fear-based traditions of men is not a light yoke to carry. It is a burden and can cause so many to live by fear, not the light of love. Only love can heal all souls.

There is a wealth of information from many diverse leaders across all denominational lines. Look for their books and websites for more information into their theological teachings.

Archbishop Kallistos Ware

UK Archbishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He contends that God restores and rehabilitates all He creates; it is blasphemy to teach that God allows suffering for all eternity.

Russian Orthodox Bishop Hilarion

Russian Orthodox Bishop teaches that God has an immeasurable amount of mercy, it is far reaching. God's love flows equally to all people. He also teaches that the

opinion that God would allow sinful people to be punished eternally is a great error; and that the final destiny of the universe must be compatible with the abundant mercy of God.

St. Faustina

Catholic Nun wrote in her diaries of several encounters with Christ. In her diaries, she emphasizes the importance of praying for the deceased and God's divine mercy.

Inclusive Minister Dr. Thorton

Dr. Thornton is the Director of Sacred Grounds Resource Center in Gloria Dei Church. He also works with an inner-city ministry for at-risk youth in Philadelphia. He teaches a progressive view with an emphasis in inclusive theology.

Pastor Dr. Stephen E. Jones

Pastor and son of Missionaries. He has written several books and you can find more information about him at his website

www.godskingdom.org

These leaders come from all walks of life and denominational backgrounds. Yet, each has encountered the same conclusion that leads them to believe that God's mercy extends farther than anyone can imagine.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 2 Corinthians 2:14 (AMP)

Chapter 7: Final Thoughts

Clark H. Pinnock in the book, *Four Views of Hell*, correctly points out that the torture of human beings for an eternity is easier to associate with Satan than a compassionate and merciful God.

In 1986, the week of the first space shuttle to carry a school teacher, I received heart breaking news that my grandfather passed away. He was one of those people who would give you the shirt off his back. For the last 40 years he had spent his life homeless due to an addiction to alcohol. The damage done to his liver would claim his life at an early age of sixty-two years. What bothered me the

most is where he would go when he died? At 19 years old, I searched the Bible to the best of my ability. I had a King James Bible and needed to find answers; one verse leads me to the conclusion that I needed to pray for him. For the next several years I had some peace. When I located his final resting place, a peace came over me that I can't explain, it was if his voice spoke to my heart letting me know that he was safe and at peace with God. I continue to be amazed that I could know such comfort. Our attitude should always be that we continue to pray for those we love, both in life on earth and after life on earth.

I have a long way to go to understand just everything I need to learn about loving and helping others. I cannot and

will not cease in self-discovery and how I can better accomplish this in my life. Praying is one the most important acts of love and kindness we can do to contribute to the well-being of others and our self. Our goal in life is to continue as seekers of Christ likeness.

I did not know at the time that the ‘prayer ‘impressed upon me was a practice followed in Judaism, Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglicans. I remember looking back at his life and recalled that the Salvation Army had provided him a home, and ministered to him. To this day I am thankful that my heart was not set in stone. I was able to take the time to pray for someone I loved. Free from any

assertion that it would be useless. I simply had the faith that my prayers would be heard. I often wonder why the reformers threw out such a loving part of our tradition. John Wesley for example was not opposed to praying for the deceased and Martin Luther was not opposed to holding out for a greater hope that all people would eventually know their creator and be redeemed. I believe to this day that it is one of the most beautiful expressions of love and compassion to pray for our loved ones who are alive or deceased. The Lord makes no distinction; we must love one another in life and in death. When Adam and Eve doubted in God's goodness sin resulted. The theology of free choice is correct in that we are free to run like a prodigal, but all prodigals eventually, come back home

(God made us rational and intelligent creatures). God the Father (and his angels) will be waiting with open arms, ready to throw a celebration. Christ won mankind's inheritance! Our Father accomplishes all that His plan has pre-determined. To lead ALL of humanity back home.

And it shall be that from one New Moon to another New Moon and from one Sabbath to another Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord. Isaiah 66:23 (AMP)

Why are people quick to accept that they can damn themselves by their free choice, but slow to believe that God is capable of transforming broken souls? Perhaps it is easier for sinful creatures to forget who God is. The

devil's pride led to his fall and Adam and Eve's doubt led to their fall. But this does not make it impossible for God to salvage and redeem ALL He Created. May God continue to bless and encourage you. Thank you for taking the time to consider my journey. Blessings as you contemplate the scriptures testimony of *God's unconditional love and compassion.*

So then [God's gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God's mercy. [It depends neither on one's own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God's having mercy on him.]

Romans 9:16 (AMP)

I hope this book has brought hope to those who feel hopeless, I pray that it brings comfort to those who have lost loved ones, and lastly, I hope it blesses all readers. Our God is full of love and compassion.

We are not saved by believing in the existence of Christ, but by believing He will accomplish what He says He will, which is saving us from eternal death. And no one is powerful enough to stop God from accomplishing what He has ordained to do, to bring life and restoration to everyone who has been born into a fallen world.

With a view to this we toil and strive, [yes and] suffer reproach, because we have [fixed our] hope on the living God, who is the Savior (Preserver, Maintainer, Deliverer) of all men, especially of those who believe (trust in, rely on, and adhere to Him). 1 Tim 4:10 (AMP)

Chapter 8 Poetry

Will you Love Her

Will you love her

When her glory fades...

Will you When her beauty withers away

Will you Desire her sweet fragrance

Will you When her splendor is gone

Will you See her with your eyes

Will you See her with your heart

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us

and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 John 4:10

God Wanted you to Know

He saw you crying last night

He captured all your tears

He is not angry if this is what you fear...

He saw your heart as it broke in two

Don't you worry? His love will see you through....

He sees your anxious thoughts

He just wanted you to know everything is going to work out He
has plans to prosper you....

He knows all your struggles the small ones

And the enormous ones too....

He just wanted you to know....

No matter how much it hurts or how afraid you may feel when
life hands you a raw deal.

His love is free and very real

He just wanted you to know

His love will see you through

“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my
tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”

Psalm 56:8

Never Lost

If you've lost your way God's Grace and Mercy are never far away.

No matter how far you may stray His love will never fade.

Like the moon shines each night Look to the Son, His light will guide your way.

When you have lost your will, His strength will hold you still.

"The LORD your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17

Love Wins

People are dying People are crying

Some people give up and stop trying.

Kindness and Compassion is a dying breed

But we can change this world if we give love a chance

We must stand together and reach for unity

Kindness will give peace and hope for all

To restore the world from the great fall

We must never stop trying to end the world of crying.

Pain and misery will come to an end because love always wins!

“Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, and never gives up.” 1 Corinthians 13:7

Shattered

Shattered but not broken.

Discouraged but not without hope.

Abandoned but not alone.

Hurt but not without comfort.

Fearful but not without courage.

Weakened but not without strength.

“For I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength I need.” ~Philippians 4:13

Trust in the Lord with all your heart: do not depend
on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5

How Kind the Lord is! How good He is! So merciful,
this God of ours! Psalms 116:5

He causes us to remember His wonderful works.

How gracious and merciful and compassionate is our
Lord! Psalms 111:4