

HEBREWS 10:30, 31

CERTAINTIES: THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

“We know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”¹

Few portions of the Word are calculated to give the Christian pause as is this one verse. The Living God does not ignore sin, especially when sin is found in His own, dear child. We who know God are only too aware that we are held accountable for our choices, for our actions, for our words. We are told, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:10]. Knowing our accountability to the Living God should humble us. Perhaps humble is not the right word; perhaps “terrify” is a better choice.

Contemporary Christians are guilty of a terrible sin—we have lost the fear of the Lord. Oh, yes, I understand that God is merciful. I know that Christ Jesus calls us to come to Him for succor. He invites, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” [MATTHEW 11:28]. I understand that the Master is “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” [PSALM 18:24]. Yet, despite all this, I fear we Christians no longer hold the Lord God in awe. What is worse, I wonder whether we actually know God—I mean understand that He is God. We know about God, but do we know God? Do we actually know that God is not like us? Do we understand that He is holy? That He is merciful? That He seeks our benefit? Until we actually realise that God is holy, and that we are called to reflect His character, it is difficult to say anything concerning who He is or concerning our relationship to Him.

THE SETTING — In order to understand the citations that comprise our text today, it will be beneficial to review what has gone before. So, let’s move back a few verses and see what is going on. Beginning from **THE NINETEENTH VERSE**, we read some most interesting statements. The **TENTH CHAPTER** begins with a review of the breadth and efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice. We are informed of the greatness of all that He accomplished with His sacrifice—expiation for the sin of mankind is provided for all eternity. The writer points to the words of Scripture as the voice of the Holy Spirit promising all this. Quoting the words of Jeremiah, the writer says these are the words of the Holy Spirit.

“The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

“This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,’

then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

“Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” [HEBREWS 10:15-18].

At this point, the writer begins the portion of the Word that will eventuate in our text. “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” [HEBREWS 10:19-31].

We are encouraged by the voice of the Holy Spirit to enter into the presence of the Living God. Don’t say you’ve never been encouraged to flee to Christ for refuge from the wrath of God. If you are hearing my words today, you are hearing the call of God to flee for salvation. As the Word of God is read, as His message is declared, God speaks to hearts, pleading with those who hear to turn to Him and be saved. We enter into God’s presence through Christ Jesus our Lord, believing that He has provided the perfect sacrifice for our sinful, broken condition. Having come into the presence of the Lord God, we are taught to consider one another, look upon one another to encourage fellow Christians to excel in the grace of God. Encouragement through sharing in congregational worship is emphasised.

Now, here is the frightening part of the message; this is where things become scary. Those who hear these words are warned that they must not trifle with the Living God. We hear the invitation to life, we hear Him call us to come for rest through faith in His Son, but if we reject His gracious call, nothing is left except “a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” [HEBREWS 10:27].

Emphasising his point, the writer refers back to the provisions of the Law. Under the Mosaic Law, those who blasphemed, those who refused God’s reign over life, were to be killed. Two or three witnesses were required to invoke this capital clause, but the sentence was death for those egregious sins that defied God and His holiness. The community was to put to death murderers, those who abused their parents (both physical abuse and verbal abuse), kidnappers, those who engaged in aberrant sexual acts, those guilty of lèse majesté, any attempting to introduce false religions and various other sinful acts. The community was to ensure due process and they were not to permit the taking of life unless multiple witnesses gave first-hand testimony. The writer in the text notes, “Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses” [HEBREWS 10:28]. The writer then raises the spectre of divine judgement, asking, “How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace” [HEBREWS 10:29]?

WE KNOW HIM — “We know him who said...” The writer identifies the One of whom he speaks as the One who gave Scripture. In other words, the writer is stating that He who gave Scripture spoke to men. Think that through! God, who spoke the words of Scripture, speaks to mankind through that Word. When we read the Word of God, we are seeing the very words that the Living God speaks for our benefit! God speaks to men! When you read Scripture, you can be confident that you know the mind of God— God has revealed His mind through the Word!

There is a telling passage in the writings of Ezekiel. God is challenging His prophet to confront the people of God, when He says, “Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know the abominations of their fathers, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. And I said to them, ‘Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.’ But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

“Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt” [EZEKIEL 20:4-9].

The LORD God says He made Himself known to Israel when they were still in Egypt; He says that the very act of bringing the people out of Egypt was a revelation of who He is. Indeed, God sent Moses with signs and wonders and a message to serve the LORD. God demonstrated His might as He defeated the gods of Egypt. We think of the plagues as events that demonstrated God’s might—and they were! However, in sending those plagues, God was judging the gods in whom the Egyptians had trusted. This becomes evident when God is preparing Israel for the final plague and says, “I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD” [EXODUS 12:12]. Moses, referring to the Egyptians, says, “The LORD also executed judgments on their gods” [NUMBERS 33:4b NET BIBLE].

We have often read the opening words of Paul’s Letter to Roman Christians, focusing on the condition of a society that has exalted their own importance; however, there is a statement in those opening words that is germane to the current discussion. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” [ROMANS 1:18-21]. Scope in on that **TWENTY-FIRST VERSE**: “although they knew God, they did not honour Him as God or give thanks to Him.” The people who turn to pursue their own fallen, evil desires know God. They know God through His creation, through repeated demonstration of His power and divine nature—in short, people know God. It isn’t merely that people know about God—they know God! This is why mankind’s perfidy is inexcusable!

HEBREWS 10:30
THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

God has revealed Himself to mankind; and God has made His will known to mankind. Among the Psalms David wrote is one which addresses God's revelation of Himself.

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.”

[PSALM 19:1-6]

After Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, had returned from his journey through space, Nikita Khrushchev was quoted as saying, “Gagarin flew into space, but didn't see any god there.”²

Preparing the message, I found the following amusing anecdote. As Yuri Gagarin's close friend and cosmonaut colleague, Alexei Leonov tells it, then-premier Nikita Khrushchev cornered Gagarin. “So tell me, Yuri,” he asked, “did you see God up there?” After a moment's pause. Gagarin answered, “Yes sir, I did.” Khrushchev frowned, and said, “Don't tell any one.” A few minutes later the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church took Gagarin aside. “So, tell me, my child,” he asked Gagarin, “did you see God up there?” Gagarin hesitated before replying, “No sir, I did not.” “Don't tell anyone.”³

Dear people, whenever an individual says he or she can't find God, it's because that person didn't look! If an individual has the capacity to observe nature, enjoying the world about himself or herself, that person knows there is a God. The individual may not know God in the intimate sense, but the individual knows there is a God. You may be assured that each individual who has left this life behind knows there is a God.

Preaching to the cultured Athenians, Paul said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us” [ACTS 17:22-27].

² Wikiquote, attributed to Nikita Khrushchev in a speech delivered at the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU about the state's anti-religion campaign, https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Yuri_Gagarin, accessed 9 March 2018

³ Wikiquote, Yuri Gagarin, *ibid*.

HEBREWS 10:30
THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

The Apostle's statement that God determined the boundaries of mankind's dwelling place so that people would "perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" is instructive. Then, he clinches the argument when he says, "Yet he is actually not far from each one of us." It is not an issue that God is distant and unknowable—God is always close at hand. Man shoves knowledge of God far from his mind so he will not have to confront his own evil.

WE KNOW WHAT HE SAID — The writer cites two terrifying sayings from the Living God: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" and "The Lord will judge his people." The sayings are terrifying because they warn against presumptuous sin. Presumptuous sins are those sins motivated by the deceit of the human heart; and we know from the Word of God that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" [JEREMIAH 17:9]. The two citations the writer uses are from The Book of Deuteronomy. The first citation is from **DEUTERONOMY 32:35**:

"Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
for the day of their calamity is at hand,
and their doom comes swiftly.'

The second citation is found in the verse following,

"The LORD will vindicate his people
and have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone
and there is none remaining, bond or free."

[**DEUTERONOMY 32:36**]

The verses I've just read are translated from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which this writer used, are slightly different. In that Greek translation, these verses read as follows:

*"In a day of vengeance I will repay,
when their foot slips,
for the day of destruction to them is near,
and their lot is presently prepared for you.'*
For the Lord will judge his people,
and he will relent on his slaves.
For he saw them exhausted
and failing in misery and weakened."

[**DEUTERONOMY 32:35, 36 LEXHAM ENGLISH SEPTUAGINT⁴**]

It is apparent that this writer, as was also true of the Apostle Paul, quoted the Septuagint translation as it would have been more readily understood by worshippers. This would be especially true since many of the Jewish people had forgotten how to read Hebrew or Aramaic. Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Empire, and all would have understood Greek.

⁴ Rick Brannan, Isaiah Hoogendyk, Mark Keaton and Jimmy Parks, **The English-Greek Interlinear Lexham English Septuagint** (Lexham Press, 2014)

HEBREWS 10:30
THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

The writer quotes God's sayings, telling those who read that these sayings must guide our activities, and even our thoughts. When He was tempted by the tempter, Jesus quoted one statement from Deuteronomy that is worthy of serious reflection on the part of each Christian. The devil had tempted Jesus to turn stones into loaves of bread. Jesus quoted **DEUTERONOMY 8:3**: "Jesus answered, 'It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

[**MATTHEW 4:4**]

Note that it is by *every* word that comes from the mouth of God. *Every* word—there are no superfluous words from God's mouth, no throwaway words from His mouth. Since Peter has taught us, "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" [**2 PETER 1:20, 21**], then we can be assured that the Bible—the entire Bible—is the Word of the Living God.

The purpose for my emphasis is to point out the obvious—if we live by *every word* that comes from the mouth of God, how can it be that some among us have never read the entire Word? Does every word include Numbers, or Leviticus, or Philippians? Surely every word includes even those portions we speak of as obscure. This means that if we will honour the Lord our God, we will read His Word. I don't mean that we'll read part of His Word, we will make it a point to read the whole of His Word.

Donald Whitney, in a worship conference at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary⁵ spoke of his practise of reading a chapter from the Proverbs each day over the course of many years. There are thirty-one chapters in the Proverbs, so by reading the chapter corresponding to the day of the month, you will read through Proverbs repeatedly. Months that only have thirty days or the month of February will require a different treatment, but we're sophisticated enough to address what appears to be a problem.

As Doctor Whitney related the story, he commented that on the seventh of each month he comes to the seventh chapter of the Book of Proverbs. He noted that in that seventh chapter Solomon writes that through the lattice he saw a young man going down the street to the harlot's house. He commented that as he reads that, having read it over six hundred times, he says, "Don't go down there this month. You go down there every month; the same bad thing happens. Just don't do it this month." Of course, every month, the young man does it again.

Doctor Whitney makes the point of asking, "Why do I need to read this again?" Upon reflection, he said the reason he needs to read that again is because when that same temptation comes to him, he is never more than thirty days away from the warning against that particular sin. There is wisdom in what he said. You see, it is a tragic truth that long before a Christian slips into some heinous sin, that Christian will have ceased investing himself or herself in the Word of God. Saints of a bygone era were wont to say,

"The Word of God will keep you from sin;
or sin will keep you from the Word of God."

⁵ Donald Whitney, "Think: Worship Conference – General Session 2 with Donald S. Whitney," <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=donald+whitney&view=detail&mid=DAB1F8A81D7C0E38BD31DAB1F8A81D7C0E38BD31&FORM=VIRE>, accessed 10 March 2018

Therefore, when God speaks, even when it appears threatening to the actions and attitudes with which we have grown comfortable, we must understand that God is speaking so that we might live! If God speaks of vengeance, then we need to take heed and turn from doing that which dishonours Him. If God speaks of judging His people, if we count ourselves as one of His, we must listen to the warning knowing it is given for our benefit. In the warnings and instructions He gives, God seeks our good, and His glory. In fact, many times what we consider to be a threat is actually a word of encouragement. Let me show you what I mean.

Writing the saints in Corinth, the Apostle to the Gentiles wrote of that day when Christians shall appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ. This is not that Great White Throne before which sinners shall be arraigned before formal sentence is pronounced; this is the Bema, the seat from which Christians shall be honoured and Christ glorified. This is what Paul wrote. “We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

“So, we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10].

Preachers often focus on the tenth verse, using it as cudgel to beat the sheep into compliance with whatever behaviour the preacher thinks is required. When I read those words, I cannot divorce them from the affirmation of the sixth verse: “we are always confident.”⁶ What the Apostle has written was provided to encourage the saints of God; his purpose is not to intimidate the saints. These words fit with what is written in the earlier letter to the same saints.

“No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” [1 CORINTHIANS 3:11-15].

We need to remember that Christ is coming again to receive His people to Himself. When He comes again, He comes “to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed” [2 THESSALONIANS 1:10]. The purpose of these words of God are to ensure “that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” [2 THESSALONIANS 1:12]. The study of the return of the Lord should not be a source of terror for the people of God; the Lord’s return should be a source of hope for God’s beloved saints. This is why Scripture says, “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” [TITUS 2:11-13].

⁶ **Christian Standard Bible** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2017)

WE KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FEAR — Despite what has been discussed to this point in the message, know that it is high time that we who believe learn that the Lord God is to be feared. Our text cautions, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” [**HEBREWS 10:31**]. If the warning means nothing else, it does mean that we must take care not to trifle either with the Word of God or with the Living God Himself. Let me look at this final verse of the text from the perspective of the lost before we consider the perspective of the redeemed.

Lost people have every reason to fear falling into the hands of the Living God. John, the Revelator, saw what is coming upon the earth while he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. Writing of the final judgement of the wicked, John wrote, “I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” [**REVELATION 20:11-15**].

There is an awful, a dreadful day, that awaits all who have refused God’s sacrifice for sin. You see, God sent His Son to take upon Himself the penalty of sin. No individual need be separated from God at death, for God has made provision for all people by sending His Son to take upon Himself the punishment we deserve. We have sinned against God’s righteousness. We have offended the Holy One and brought upon ourselves condemnation. However, God has made provision for our sin to be set aside. He has done this through sending His Son to take our place. Thus, an infinite sacrifice has already been provided if we will receive that sacrifice.

We read in Scripture, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” [**ROMANS 8:1-8**].

The Apostle encourages us believers that we are accepted in the Beloved Son because we are in the Spirit. However, those who are not in the Spirit are in the flesh, and it is certain that, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” When we speak of “the flesh,” we are speaking of the perspective of this moment we call now. It is the drive to live for self as though the present will continue without interruption. Of course, that cannot be true—we are dying from the moment we are born.

We are certain that we will not continue as we are throughout eternity. Even the densest soul recognises that death is inevitable. Shove the thought ever so far from your consciousness, and yet in the quiet moments it intrudes, disquieting the mind. Let me ask those who are Christians, does the thought that sinners shall die and face the wrath of God disturb your heart? Does it matter to you that loved ones, that friends shall be excluded from the rolls of the blessed?

HEBREWS 10:30
THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

In our hymnal is an old hymn that is not sung nearly often enough. The second verse of that hymn pleads with Christians to be compassionate toward the lost.

Brethren, see poor sinners round you,
Trembling on the brink of woe;
Death is coming, hell is moving;
Can you bear to let them go?

See our fathers, see our mothers,
And our children sinking down;
Brethren, pray, and holy manna
Will be showered all around.⁷

To any who hear my voice, and somehow you are still outside the precincts of grace, know that “Death is coming, hell is moving.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Jesus warned those who heard Him preach, “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him” [LUKE 12:4, 5]! This is not a statement announced with glee; it is a plea flowing from a heart of compassion.

So it is among the people of God. We do not exalt ourselves or argue that we are somehow superior to others. We are sinners who have been set free from condemnation. Because of His mercies, we are filled with compassion to plead with the lost to turn to Christ. Receive the grace of God in Jesus our Lord and be set free from guilt and fear.

When we consider the statement of the thirty-first verse, it applies to Christians as well. As followers of the Christ, we read those words and we must be moved with compassion. If the knowledge that people whom we know, people whom we love, must be separated from the love of God eternally will not move us to pray for them and to plead with them, what will move us? We know God and we believe Him when He speaks. We were once among those who are under sentence of death. In mercy, God saved us and set us free. We cannot now adopt an attitude that gloats in our fortune and ignores the need of others. We must love others enough to tell them of the goodness of our God, to speak of His grace and His love.

Listening to proponents of the major religions, and even listening to many who are called by the Name of the Master, it often appears they delight to speak of the judgement of sinners. There is no joy in the thought that sinners must be separated from the love of God forever and ever. Rather, we would speak of the grace of God as He offers to set aside all condemnation receiving all who turn to Him in Faith. This is our message as children of the Living God.

When a sinful jailer asked the missionaries what was necessary to be saved, Paul and Silas responded, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” [ACTS 16:31]. The faith of a man is great; his faith will have an impact in the life of his wife and in the lives of his children. God will be glorified and a family will be delivered.

Jesus promised those who heard Him as He declared the grace of the Living God, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” [JOHN 5:24].

⁷ George Atkins, “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship,” from **Spiritual Songster**, 1819

HEBREWS 10:30
THE GOD WHOM WE KNOW

Those who know the Saviour will not only have compassion on the lost, but they will be moved with compassion for those who are experiencing opposition because of the Faith. Following the text, the writer continues speaking to all who follow the Master, reminding them of what they had suffered as believers in earlier days. Not only did they experience opposition because of their faith in the Son of God, but they were aware of others who experienced the pressure of opposition. They were moved with compassion for their fellow believers. The writer points all this out and urges his readers to endure as they recall what has passed.

“Recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised” [HEBREWS 10:32-36].

We hear of the plight of followers of the Christ in distant places. However, it seems as if we are hearing fanciful stories; we don't know anyone who is experiencing trials. So, too often we are unmoved by their plight. However, if the Faith is greater than church life in North America, we must make ourselves aware of what our brothers and sisters are experiencing in distant lands. When we have become aware, we will be moved with compassion to pray for their relief. We will find ways to encourage them. We will find ourselves impelled by the Spirit to plead with the Lord for their deliverance.

Sometimes, I read Peter's words as he closes his first letter. He speaks of the source of opposition that all who follow Christ experience. What he says to fellow believers is moving. “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” [1 PETER 5:8, 9]. Because we are followers of the Christ, we will experience opposition. Satan himself will seek to unnerve us. He will attempt to terrify us. When you are assaulted, resist the evil one; and as you resist him, understand that what you are experiencing is what your fellow saints are experiencing throughout the world.

Are you seeing the heartache of a child who is attracted by the glitter of this dying world? Know that there is a mother in Korea who is watching her child turn away from the Faith, and it breaks her heart as well. Are you feeling the pain of a chronic condition that leaves you limp and exhausted? Know that there is a father in Iran who is exhausted by the unremitting attacks from evil men. Are you struggling to find the time to be alone with God, feeling the demands of a job that seems to control you rather than you controlling it? Know that there is a man in Somalia who wonders how he will find time to pray because of his need to find firewood for his family. The same challenges face the brotherhood throughout the world. All that changes is the intensity of the attack and the means by which the evil one assails the people of God.

Knowing this pressure, allow God's Spirit to move you to pray for those who struggle, just as you struggle. Knowing that you long for God's glory, allow the Spirit of God to impel you to remember that throughout this world are fellow believers who will be encouraged as you remember them in prayer. Let the compassion of the Master become compassion motivating you in your daily prayers. Amen.