

## The First Gospel According to Lawrence

The Gospel simply means “**Good News**”. If it isn’t “**Good News**, it isn’t “**Gospel**”. This is written to people that already consider themselves to be “Christians”. If you are not yet a “Christian”, you are certainly welcome to read this, just understand that you are not the primary audience. As “Christians”, we have an understanding of what we believe to be the truth. We try to back up the things that we claim to believe with scripture verses quoted from the Bible. It is easiest, to get our belief systems from organizations that will tell us what we believe. I have found that simply listening to any person or group, and just believing what they say is true, will ultimately lead us into certain false beliefs.

To make the last point more clear, let me illustrate. There are numerous organizations such as the one that I was born into. I was born the son of a missionary preacher for the “Church of Christ”. They don’t say it in their name, however, they believe they are the “One and Only True Church of Christ”. Before you laugh and say how silly that is, there are lots more where that came from. There are Catholics, Jews, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Muslims, etc. I just listed eight separate groups that would say that they were God’s one true religion. The only thing that we know for sure is that at least seven are lying. I am pretty sure it is actually all eight. There is no such thing as the only true church. There is however, the “Body of Christ”. Every real “Christian” is a member of the “Body of Christ”. The only question is what part of the body are you? Jesus is the head of his body. I am probably the armpit of Christ. You can pray about it and maybe God will tell you what part you are.

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of **the body of Christ**; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into **Him who is the head, even Christ**”, (Ephesians 4:11-15 NASB).

So, according to the apostle Paul, let’s speak the truth in love. With that being said, let’s admit that there is very little, if anything that we can actually prove to be the truth. The truth is really what we believe. It is our faith. If we could prove it, it wouldn’t be faith, it would be fact. Therefore, let’s not get all excited and think that we know more than we actually do. Again, it is our belief, faith. Arguably one of the biggest spiritual giants of all time was the apostle Paul. He felt there was one message that everyone needed to know about, he said “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1Corinthians 2:2 NASB). Can we please make “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” our common denominator? Can we please have fellowship on that alone, if that is all that we can agree on? Can we please stop acting like we have it all figured out?

Can we agree that it does not matter how much we know, until we know how much we care? Can we spend our time and energy on learning how to love one another? With the aforementioned as a back drop, let's get one more thing out of the way. I plan on bringing some thought provoking ideas, concepts, and possibilities into this paper before I am through. So, I would like to establish a few things before we get into it.

- 1) I believe that I would be considered a "**Saved Christian**" by any standard that I am aware of by any group that I would consider to be "Christian".
- 2) I have been "**born again**" by saying the "**sinner's prayer**", no less than 15-20 times at the invitation of multiple ministers. Not the least of which would be the Reverend Billy Graham, Pastor Chuck Smith, Evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman, and other assorted servants of God. "**that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;** for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation". (Romans 10:9-10)
- 3) I was baptized by immersion at the age of seven, by my own preacher father Harry Robert Fox Jr. in the baptismal font of the Uptown Church of Christ in Long Beach, CA.
- 4) The single most important truth involving a person being a "**Christian**", and attaining "**Salvation**" is the fact that, Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (John 14:6 NKJV)

I wanted to get that out of the way, lest you think that anything that I might bring up could be categorized as "**cheap grace**" or "**too good to be true**", or "you only believe that because if it is not true, you are not going to make it into eternity. Your salvation is in question." The things that I am going to bring up, have nothing to do with my own personal "salvation". I am 99.9 per-cent sure that has already been taken care of. I simply want the truth to be known. "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and **you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" (John 8:31 NASB)

Let's get started. Who created the game we will call "Life on Planet Earth"?

**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** (Genesis 1:1 NASB)

Let's talk about God for a minute. What are some of God's traits?

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? **No one is good except God alone.** (Luke 18:19 NASB) And I say "**God is good, all the time!**"

The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.** (1John 4:8 NASB)

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.** (1John 4:16 NASB)

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is Light**, and **in Him there is no darkness at all.** (1John 1:5 NASB)

**There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear,** because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1John 4:18 NASB) The point I am trying to make here is, I believe God is not only good, He is always good. There is no time ever that God is not good. God is always light, and there is never any darkness in Him. God never sins, and He never tempts anyone to sin. **God is never evil,** and he never tempts anyone to do evil. There is no fear in God. God is love, and perfect love casts out fear. So, to be clear, God did not have anything to do with making Adam and Eve to eat the apple, Cain to kill Abel, Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus, Adolf Hitler to kill six million Jews. What He did was to set up a system where evil was a variable, was a dynamic, and was a choice. If God did not create the ability for evil to exist in His creation, it would not exist.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **Love never fails;**(1Corinthians 13:4-8) But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; **but the greatest of these is love.** (1Corinthians 13:13 NASB)

## Who created evil?

And out of the ground **the LORD God made every tree grow** that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, **and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.** (Genesis 2:9 NKJV)

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field **which the LORD God had made.** (Genesis 3:1 NKJV)

**Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul** as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. (1Samuel 19:9 NASB)

I form the light, and create darkness: **I make peace, and create evil:** I the LORD do all these things. (Isaiah 45:7 KJV)

“You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. **On the day that you were created** They were prepared. “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. “You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. (Ezekiel 28:13-15 NASB)

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? *shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?* (Amos 3:6 KJV) Seems pretty obvious, *God created evil.* Real simple. I love it. That means **He has it under control.** It did not sneak up on Him. He is not surprised by it. He can un-create it. It is not scary. It is wonderful. It does not make God evil! **It makes Him GREAT!**

It is extremely rare to find anyone that will touch this subject. Everyone acts as if God cannot take care of Himself. He needs manmade protection lest anyone should think that maybe He might have something to do with evil. Of course He has something to do with evil. I just quoted several scriptures that says God has a lot to do with evil, and even created it. Just because God created evil, it does not say, or mean that He is evil! Evil is simply one of the ingredients necessary for the “stew of life” to be complete. A good stew needs lots of ingredients. Meat, vegetables, potatoes, carrots, onions, seasonings, herbs, spices are all ingredients necessary for a really good stew. The game of “Life on Planet Earth”, needs several ingredients in order to fulfill God’s plan. Without evil, there is no good. Without sorrow, there is no joy. Without sin, there is no salvation. Evil is bad, but it is also necessary. You know, “a necessary evil”. At the time I started writing this paper I had never heard anyone address the subject of God and evil. As I was doing my research I ran across the following by Gerry Beauchemin.

## Free-will, Sovereignty, Ownership, Evil

Although most Christians believe God is sovereign, their theology seems to deny it when questioned on details. They assume He has put aside His sovereignty to allow man to have free-will. This is usually done with the intention of explaining evil in the world. How free is our will? Since we are told to choose what is right and shun what is wrong, it is clear that we have a will. It is commonly believed that if we have a will at all, then it must be “totally” free. There are several scriptures, however, which would tend to say otherwise. For example, (John 6:44) says, “No man can come to me except the Father draw (lit. “drag”) him. The same Greek word for drag is used in (John 21:6) where the disciples drag fish into their nets and in (James 2:6) where the rich drag us to court. Jesus uses the same word in (John 12:32), “If I be lifted up, I will drag all men unto me.” So these being “dragged” appear to be having their “free-will” overruled by a higher will. (John 6:37), “All that the Father gives me shall come to me.” In other words, those who decide to come to Christ by their own “free-will” are the people whom the Father has given Him already. It says in (Jeremiah 31:18-19, 17:14) that essentially none of us will be saved unless God initiates it. If God does not turn us, we simply will not come to Him. John tells us that we are not born of our will but of God’s (John 1:13). God does all according to His own will (Ephesians 1:11). There is someone behind the scenes who calls us and our response is, “I think I want to come to Christ.” We think it is all by our own will, yet God has played a hidden role. He has chosen us so we in turn choose Him, “seemingly” of our own will. We may tend to hold this illusion in our immaturity. But the more we come to know Him, the more sovereign He seems to become. Paul, who knew God more deeply than most, powerfully describes His Sovereignty in Romans 9 where he quotes Isaiah.

After saying that it is God who creates both the good guys and the bad guys (and that the clay has no right to question the Potter), he says plainly (v. 19) that no one can resist the boulema will (ultimate plan) of God. This is a stronger use of the Greek term for “will” than thelema which is used in other passages where it is clear that man is definitely resisting God’s will. Other examples of our inability to resist God’s highest intention include Joseph and his brothers, Pharaoh, God loving Jacob over Esau, Isaiah’s description of Cyrus, and Nebuchadnezzar as God’s tool. All these point to God’s ability to control people in spite of “free-will.” If Paul says no one can resist the boulema will of God, then how much “total” free-will do we really have? Does no one mean no one? Why do we question God’s sovereignty? Could it be because we need to explain the existence of evil in the world in a way that does not make Him liable? Theologians have proposed two solutions: one says we do not understand any purpose for evil, but know God will work all things for good. The other says God is not responsible; it is caused by people and the Devil who inspires them. But to absolve God of any responsibility for evil, Christians take back most of His sovereignty. Free-will taken to its conclusion removes all sovereignty from God. It leaves Him impotent, on the sidelines unable to do anything. Who is really sovereign on earth? Has God abdicated His throne? If we leave “total” free-will intact, we are left with a very scary world. If God cannot override man’s will, then He can no longer direct history—have a timetable. How much “free-will” did Paul have when God threw him on his back and told him, “you will follow me?” God overruled his will. Can He not do it with everyone? Since He demonstrated His ability to turn the chief of sinners around, we know He can do it for all. Now if He can, but chooses not to, who is really liable for lost souls? How is the question of evil resolved? It is not resolved by removing sovereignty from God, but by understanding why God does what He does. We must understand that in His sight sin is reckoned as debt. When we sin we become debtors to the law. When Adam sinned, all that he owned was sold to sin and sin held the debt note until Christ paid it off. We need to know that we have limited authority over ourselves and that the Jubilee ends all debt (Leviticus 25). Is it really a question of free-will versus sovereignty or is it a question of ownership? From a legal standpoint, the question of free-will is only a side bar. The issue is resolved when we understand that God, as Creator, owns all He has made (Genesis 1:1; Ezekiel 18:4). If man was formed from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) and all the earth is God’s (Leviticus 25:23) and the land, under law, must always be redeemed we understand the right of ownership. God always claims right of eminent domain. Man has delegated authority, but God retains sovereignty! In explaining evil, the ownership issue is crucial. We must look at evil in light of the liability laws. Liability is based on ownership (Exodus 21:33-4). If a man digs a pit and does not take the necessary steps to cover it, and an ox comes along (of his own free will) and falls in the pit, the man is liable. He must buy the dead ox. Other liability laws which say the same thing are (Deuteronomy 22:8) and (Exodus 22:5-6).

Consider the Garden of Eden. Back in the garden, God dug a pit. He did not cover it up and man fell in. The pit was complete with a couple of temptation trees and a tempter. God was fully aware what decision Adam would make. Yet God did not cover the pit. He could have prevented Adam from sinning by not planting the trees and placing the tempter in another

universe. But God dug that pit and purposely left it uncovered. He had a plan. The plan called for man to fall. By God's own liability laws, He made Himself responsible. He purposely obligated Himself to take care of the situation. He sent His Son to pay the price. All creation became subject to death through Adam's fall. God bought the dead ox and owns it. He fulfilled the terms of redemption - bought all who fell. In doing so, He fulfilled the law. This is the Good News! Christ's blood redeemed the whole world (1John 2:2; 1Timothy 2:6)!

In conclusion, according to these laws, the insistence that we have free-will may reduce God's liability, but not eliminate it altogether. In God's court, free-will is not a factor. God wrote the law of liability so we would understand His obligation to purchase the whole world. Though we do not have an explanation for each piece of the puzzle about evil, we know God is sovereign. This may not be much comfort for those going through horrible situations, but at least we can rest assured He works all things for our good. Every injustice will be rectified. In the end, we will look back on all that has happened and say, "God was justified in all He has done."

That is an amazing narrative on God's ownership of everything. After all, if He created everything, then He owns everything. So, according to His own laws of ownership and liability, a case could certainly be made that God is legally required to reconcile His creation.

## Can evil be used for good?

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good* in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Genesis 50:20 NASB)

And we know that *God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God*, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28 NASB)

Is creating the "Knowledge of good and evil" evil? No!

Is creating the potential to do evil, evil? No!

If by creating the option to do evil, it created so much evil that the Creator Himself had to sacrifice Himself to atone for the sins created by the evil, would that be evil? No!

That would be called "Amazing Grace". That would be called the "Gift of Salvation".

That would be called "Being Responsible". That would be "Unfailing Love".

Even though God does not make, or even tempt anyone to do evil, *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God" for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.* (James 1:13 NASB), He took responsibility for it! He knew that during the creation, when He looked at what He had done, He called it GOOD! How could you call something GOOD, when you know that in order to reconcile this creation to yourself you would have to send your only begotten Son to the cross to be crucified. It is my understanding that the Romans created crucifixion for the sole purpose of inflicting the maximum amount of pain and suffering to a person as he was dying. God knew that He would also be participating in the crucifixion. *"God was in Christ* reconciling the world to himself." (2 Corinthians 5:19 NASB)

How the Godhead was in Christ is one of His mysteries. This is love beyond human comprehension. **This is Agape love. This is love that never fails.**

As was pointed out in the movie “The Shack”, the Holy Spirit talks about the root of a certain plant that is poisonous. It would kill you if you got the juice inside of you, but if mixed with another plant it would create a healing lotion, making good out of evil!

Let’s talk about God’s perfect love and fear. Since the scripture clearly states that “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear”, there should be no fear involved in our making eternal choices dealing with our belief system. In other words any coercion used to help us make the proper decision dealing with our relationship to God should not be based on fear. You know the kind of thing that would suggest that if I make one wrong move or decision, myself and/or people/family members that I love could possibly roast in Hell for eternity. Like after one billion trillion years, it has not even started. I would love for anyone to explain to me how this type of thinking/teaching complies with what the scripture tells us about unfailing Agape love.

In order to try to make any sense out of eternal “Hell fire and damnation”, we need to go to the same place we go to learn any spiritual truth, “The Scriptures”. In the King James Version of The Bible as well as The Greek Septuagint the Greek words **Aion** and **Aionios** (adjective) are mostly translated “eternal,” “everlasting,” and for “ever”. However, some translations read “age-abiding,” “age-during,” or “eon.” Robert Young, author of the highly respected “Young’s Analytical Concordance”, in his literal translation of the Bible, *always translates it ‘age’ and never once as ‘everlasting,’ or ‘eternal.’*

In “History of Opinions on the Scriptural Doctrine of Retribution”, Edward Beecher, D.D., pointed out: “The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament and was the Bible of the early church. The word **aion** occurs in it about four hundred times in every variety of combination. The adjective **aionios** derived from it, is used over one hundred times... *Aion denoted an age, great or small, so the adjective aionios expressed the idea pertaining to or belonging to the aion, whether great or small.* But in every case this adjective derives its character and duration from the **aion** to which it refers”.

In the Septuagint the Greek word, **aion**, is used to translate the Hebrew word **olam**. Thus, if we want to get a sense of the New Testament meaning of **aion**, we need to understand the meaning of **olam** in the Old Testament. *Numerous passages referring to **olam** show clearly it cannot mean “never-ending” in those texts.*

Note these few: Hills are everlasting [**olam**]. But only until made low and the earth is burned up (Genesis 49:26; Isaiah 40:4; 2 Peter 3:10).

A slave serves his master forever [**olam**]. But only until death ends his servitude (Exodus 21:6). Mountains are everlasting [**olam**]. But only until they are scattered (Habakkuk 3:6).

Dr. Helena Keizer is a trustworthy authority on the definition of aiōn in ancient Greek literature, including the Bible in the time of Christ. Keizer published a 315-page doctoral dissertation titled: “Life, Time, Entirety – A Study of Aiōn in Greek Literature and Philosophy, the Septuagint and Philo.” Presented on September 7, 1999 in Holland, at Amsterdam University. Keizer stated: “**Olām** and hence **aiōn** in the Biblical sense is time constituting the human temporal horizon.” **“Our study has led to the conclusion that infinity is not an intrinsic or necessary connotation of aiōn, either in the Greek or in the Biblical usage (‘olām).” “To speak of ‘this aiōn’, its ‘end,’ and ‘the aiōn to come’ clearly lends to aiōn the meaning of a limited time.”**

(Matthew 25:46) contains an additional clue confirming the temporary nature of God’s judgment. **The Greek word, translated “punishment,” is kolasis.** William Barclay, world-renowned Greek scholar, translator, and author of the popular Bible commentary, The Daily Study Bible and New Testament Words, noted: The Greek word for punishment here (Matthew 25:46) is **kolasis**, which was not originally an ethical word at all. It originally meant the pruning of trees to make them grow better. **I think it is true to say that in all Greek secular literature kolasis is never used of anything but remedial punishment.**

**“And these will go away into everlasting [aionian] punishment [kolasis], but the righteous into eternal [aionian] life”** (Matthew 25:46 NKJV). Isn’t it ironic that the passage most often used to support everlasting punishment is in fact one strongly opposing it when accurately understood?

**Aionian (eternal), when associated with God, may simply refer to that which comes forth from Him and relates to His purposes; a quality of essence rather than of duration.** Is this not what our Lord intends in (John 17:3): “And this is eternal life, that they may know You.” If this is so, perhaps Matthew 25:46 could be paraphrased this way: **“And these will go away into the chastisement of God, but the righteous into the life of God.”**

Professor Talbott confirmed this: “When the letter of Jude describes the fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah as “eternal fire,” the point is not that the fire literally burns forever without consuming the cities; it is not that the fire continues to burn even today. The point is that the fire is a form of divine judgment upon those cities...that has its causal source in the eternal God himself. And similar for Jesus’ reference to “eternal fire” in (Matthew 25:41) and to “eternal punishment” in (Matthew 25:46). **The fire to which he alludes is not eternal in the sense that it burns forever without consuming anything—without consuming, for example, that which is false within a person (see 1 Corinthians 3:15)—and neither is the punishment eternal in the sense that it continues forever without accomplishing its corrective purpose. Both the fire and the punishment are eternal in the sense that they have their causal source in the eternal God himself.** The simplest way to put it is that **aionios** cannot be used properly of anyone but God; it is the word uniquely, as Plato saw it, of God.

*Eternal punishment is then literally that kind of remedial punishment which it befits God to give and which only God can give*”.

Only the Greek word "**Aidios**" means "**Eternal**" all the time.

It appears that the New Testament has only one word which can always be translated "eternal." This is the Greek word "**aidios**" which is used only twice. Once it describes the Godhead. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes—His eternal (**aidios**) power and divine nature—have been clearly seen" (Romans 1:20 NASB). The second time it describes the chains which hold rebellious angels until their day of judgment, "he has kept in eternal (**aidios**) chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day" (Jude 1:6 NET).

Suffice it to say, if you do your own research, you will find that the words in The Bible that refer to eternal, eternity, forever, etc. do not necessarily mean infinite. The single best book dealing with this and any other questions regarding a wonderful "Blessed Hope" alternative to "Eternal Hell Fire and Damnation" is "Hope Beyond Hell" by Gerry Beauchemin. Gerry has done an extensive amount of research. You may download his book for free at [www.hopebeyondhell.net](http://www.hopebeyondhell.net) . Click on the Order/Donate button, then scroll down to where it says free book download. You will be able to get the 256 page unabridged edition in a PDF format.

Since we have touched on the duration of time to be spent in Hell, let's now look at some alternate ways to think about Hell and what it is. The second pillar in support of the doctrine of everlasting punishment is **Gehenna**. It is one of three words translated "**Hell**" in the New Testament. It is the most common, used twelve times. **Hades** is used eleven times, and **Tartarus** only once. **Gehenna...means the Valley of Hinnom**, a valley to the southwest of Jerusalem. It was notorious as the place where Ahaz had introduced the fire worship of the heathen God "**Molech**", to whom little children were burned... (2 Chronicles 28:2-4). Josiah had stamped out that worship and ordered that the valley should be forever after an accursed place...it became the place where the refuse of Jerusalem was cast out and destroyed. It was a kind of public incinerator. Always the fire smoldered in it, and a pall of thick smoke lay over it, and bred a loathsome kind of worm which was hard to kill (Mark 9:44-48). So **Gehenna**, the Valley of Hinnom, became identified in people's minds with all that was accursed and filthy, the place where useless and evil things were destroyed.

**Hades** is the Greek word for the Hebrew, **Sheol**, which the New Strong's Concise Dictionary defines as "**unseen,**" **the place (state) of departed souls**. Throughout the Old Testament it refers to the state following death for both righteous and unrighteous. The NIV translates it "**grave**" or "**death.**" **Tartarus is a holding area prior to judgment for angels who have sinned** (2 Peter 2:4). **Gehenna** is not mentioned in the Old Testament or by John, Paul, Peter, Jude, or James in all their writings (except once indirectly regarding the tongue—James 3:6). Nor is it mentioned in the book of Acts or Hebrews. Jesus uses the term on what seems like only four occasions.

(A few times He seems to refer to this judgment but without using the term. (Matthew 3:10-12; 7:19; 13:40-50; 25:41) If **Gehenna** were truly eternal and purposeless agony as claimed, how can such a horrible fate—to which most people are destined—not be warned against everywhere?

There is a whole lot of material dealing with what Hell is, and for what purpose anyone would be sent there. It is definitely not an open and shut case. It is my educated opinion that Hell can only be corrective, not punitive. There is no part of an everlasting torture chamber that fits in any way into “unconditional unfailing love”. It seems to have pagan origins. If you do your research I believe you can only come to one conclusion, and that is that God is going to reconcile His creation. The only other loving thing to do would be annihilation. Every cowboy knows, that if his horse breaks its leg, you shoot it to put it out of it’s misery. The only loving alternative God would have, if He is not going to “**save us**”, would be to simply kill us. Put us out of our misery. There are some Christian groups that believe and teach this.

## Judgment Views Compared

### Eternal Torment – (Augustinian Tradition)

1. Admits God is sovereign, all powerful, and all knowing; yet He really can’t be due to the greater power of man’s free will over God’s will.
2. God assumes no legal liability for the fall of man, even though God placed Adam in the garden with a tempter, a temptation, and created him with the ability to be tempted. It is totally Adam’s fault. He and his seed must bear the consequences throughout all eternity. (Just try to imagine “forever.”)
3. Adam’s sin was imputed to **all**, resulting in death and Hell. Unlike Adam’s sin, Christ’s death was not imputed to **all**. The act of the first Adam was far more devastating than the benefits achieved by the last Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45)
4. Due to Adam’s sin, **all** men die and are born going to Hell.
5. Hell is eternal conscious punishment in body, mind and spirit. The Lake of Fire is believed by many to be a literal fire. Hell was an intrusion into God’s plan. He did not want to create it but had to due to Satan’s rebellion and man’s fall.
6. Satan and God have been at war since the rebellion in heaven when a third of the angels rebelled with him. The former good angels became demons. Though Satan has free-will, he cannot do all he wants (see Job). Satan and God will always be enemies since Hell is forever and Satan is in Hell tormenting the lost.

7. This tradition assumes the eternal torture of the wicked has always been the majority opinion of the church.
8. It believes the Greek **aionios** always means eternal.
9. An eternal Hell means sin and evil exist forever. All sinners will exist in torment throughout eternity with Satan and his demons.
10. Christ will not draw **all** men to Himself as He said in (John 12:32). He will fail in being the Savior of the world as proclaimed in (John 4:42); (1 John 4:14).
11. The “elect” are those chosen by God to be saved from Hell. Although they have free-will, God works out the circumstances in their lives so that they are assured salvation. He could have done this for **all** people but chose not to. (This is a Calvinist / Reformed belief. Most Christians reject it.)
12. There is no possibility of salvation after death.
13. All sin is essentially judged the same: The teenager killed in a wreck, the billions who have not heard the Gospel, and Hitler, **all** go to hell forever. Although Jesus fulfilled **all** the Law and is the Kinsman Redeemer, He does not receive **all** He redeemed. The laws of redemption and the Jubilee (Leviticus 25) are not fulfilled. The laws of proper restitution for sin (Exodus 21-23) are not followed. If the only sin a person committed was stealing a loaf of bread, he will get the same punishment as Satan and **all** sinners—Hell forever. The law of first fruits is not followed. We as first fruits do not sanctify the whole harvest (only a part gets saved). The Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants which define the particulars of the Kingdom relative to scope and establishment are not fulfilled.
14. **All** the saved go to heaven at death and the unsaved to an eternal Hell. There is no continuing work of Christ on earth to save **all** men (Hebrews 13:8). His millennial reign is made up of only the saved, as **all** the unsaved are in Hell. There are no subjects for the now kings and priests to reign over and serve in humility. All who are left on earth are Christians during the Kingdom reign. The result of history is two opposing empires destined for the same duration. Satan wins the largest kingdom with the billions who never heard of Christ (Muslims, Hindus, Chinese, etc). God is ultimately denied His ownership of **all** as Creator (Ezekiel 18:4). Every knee does not bow in saving adoration. Jesus fails to bring **all** enemies into subjection (1Corinthians 15:25). God does not love His enemies as He told us to. He loves them only until death. The clay defies the Potter. God does not become “**all in all**” (1Corinthians 15:28). Sin and death are never abolished. Man’s free will can and does override God’s ultimate plan and desire to save **all**. **All** things are not restored (Acts 3:21). Salvation was an offer, not a fact. The path of history is determined by man. It ends in final chaos with horrendous human suffering existing forever. What happened to (Genesis 1:31); (Luke 2:10); (Revelation 5:13), etc.?

## The Blessed Hope

1. God is sovereign, **all** powerful, and **all** knowing, He has the power to control man and earthly events.
2. Per His liability laws (Exodus 21 and 22); (Leviticus 25) ; (Deuteronomy 22:8) God assumes legal liability for the fall (though man acted freely) as Creator and owner of **all** He creates. His obligation to save is imbedded in His law.
3. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to **all** humanity. **All** will become righteous as they come to know Him, but each in his own order. See (Romans 5) and (I Corinthians 15:23).
4. Due to Adam's sin, **all** do die and are judged.
5. "**Hell**" is an old English word meaning **to cover**. The KJV translators unfortunately used it when translating **Hades**, **Sheol** and **Gehenna**. **Hades** and **Sheol** actually means the grave, and **Gehenna** is linked to the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. **The Lake of Fire** is a "consuming fire," the application of God's divine law and judgments (Deuteronomy 33:2,3), (Isaiah 33:14), (Jeremiah 23:29), (Matthew 3:11,12), (Daniel 7:9,10 etc.). It is the Refiner's great fire (Malachi 3:2) and His ministers are a flame of fire (Hebrew 1:7). God gave His law in fire (Deuteronomy 33:2), the Holy Spirit comes in fire, and Jesus baptizes with fire. This "Fire" tries everyone's work. Everyone is purified with fire (Mark 9:49 GNT). We "will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1Corinthians 3:15), not tortured by it for eternity. As Jerome says, the "fire" is God's last medicine for the sinner. Although this fire has eternal results, it does not need to be eternal in its application. It is age-lasting (**eonian**) and lasts as long as it needs to exist for the purification of sinners. Each person's sin will be judged fairly by the application of God's law. The aborted baby, the high school student who died in an accident, the billions who have not heard the Gospel and Hitler will **all** be judged fairly. They will not all receive the same judgment for sin (eternal torture). The judgment will be pure and righteous. The penalty will fit the crime. Eternal torture for all levels of sin is unlawful judgment and violates not only the laws of God, but His nature and the conscience of man. It is illegal.
6. Satan is ultimately a tool of God. He cannot do all the damage he wants. God has limits on his activities and he needs permission to do his work (Job). Whether he rebelled or was created in his current state by God, he was no surprise. He is used by God to ultimately fulfill His purposes and plan. Satan and God will not always be enemies as the Lake of Fire is not eternal and Satan will one day cease to be.
7. The Blessed Hope was the majority view of the Church for the first 500 years of Church history. Eternal Torment dominated after Augustine.

8. **Aion** and **aionios** have been defined as “age-abiding,” “of God,” and “of the world or age to come.” None of these definitions state, imply, or require infinite duration.

9. Sin and evil do not exist forever, but evidently for the purposes of contrasts, are part of God’s plan during the ages. **The fire of Hell** is the corrective application of God’s laws and judgments. The law is the tutor which leads us to Christ.

10. Jesus Christ will draw **all** men to Himself (John 12:32). He is the Kinsman Redeemer and according to the Laws of Redemption (Leviticus 25), has full legal claim to **all** He has redeemed.

11. The “**Elect**” are chosen by God to be a blessing to **all** (Genesis 12:2). If they are found worthy, they will rule and reign with Christ in the age to come (Matthew 19:28); (Luke 12:43-44, 20:35, 22:28-30, 19:17-19; 1Co.6:2-3, 9:24-27, 16:15-16); (Philippians 3:12-14); (2 Timothy 2:12); (Revelation 1:6, 3:21, 14:4-5, 20:6).

12. The restoration of **all** begins with the covenants: the Noahic (Genesis 9) defines its scope; the Abrahamic defines through whom (Genesis 12); the Mosaic establishes the judgments of God upon the disobedient and the New Covenant is ratified with the blood of Christ. Our decision to follow Christ determines the timing, not the fact of salvation. The question is when, in what order, and by what judgments we are resurrected. The Biblical law mandates the restoration of **all** (by laws of redemption and Jubilee in Leviticus 25).

13. The continuing work of Christ includes the millennial reign on earth where He rules with His saints to bring **all** humanity into subjection to Himself, sovereignty and ultimate plan. The result of history is one eternal Kingdom with the Father and the Son as gloriously triumphant. Jesus, with His ruling saints, judges the world with righteous judgment. He drags **all** peoples to Himself. He brings **all** things into subjection. Every knee ultimately bows in adoration to Christ. In this the earth rejoices. Sin and death are abolished. History culminates in the glorious fulfillment of God becoming **all in all**. All God’s glorious restoration promises from Genesis through Revelation are fulfilled! “All the ends of the world shall...turn to the Lord and **all** the families of the nations shall worship before You.” “To You **all** flesh will come...You will provide atonement.” “He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 22:27; 65:2-3; 107:1;).

14. Is there a Scripture that says there is no hope for salvation after death? No! Death is no obstacle to God. “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for **all** live to Him” (Luke 20:38). If **all** the dead live to Him, then there is hope in death unless there is no hope in God Himself!

So, there you have it! This is by no means an exhaustive treatise on any of the aforementioned subjects. Hopefully, this will be something to whet your appetite. If you are “saved” in any of the traditional Christian belief systems, then you have nothing to worry about, as far as your own personal eternal future is concerned.

Again, this is not written for Christians who feel like the “Gospel”, the “Good News”, has something to do with a good percentage of God’s children not making it to Heaven, ever! Not only do they not make it to Heaven, they get to burn in Hell forever! You know, that time period that after one hundred million billion trillion years, it has not even started. My mind, spirit and soul have no way of wrapping around that kind of “Good News”. I will say this however, if somehow the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually would do something like this, I know by faith, He would be able to explain it in such a way that I would be able to understand it. And somehow it would be okay?

To those that might say “If we are all going to be saved anyway, why am I trying to please God and do all the things that a good “Born Again Christian” does? Like go to church, pay tithes, get involved in evangelism etc.? My answer would be in the form of another question. What is your current motivation? Why do you do what you do? If you do not believe that living the essence of the “Authentic True and Real Gospel” is in and of itself the best way to live, then you are fooling yourself! Sin is it’s own worst punishment. Right living is it’s own best reward. You know, “You better be good for goodness sake”.

What is the matter with asking God to help you be the best you that you are capable of being (with His help)? Why wouldn’t you want to be the healthiest person physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially etc.? On a secular level it would be called becoming “Wholistic”. Treating the whole person. If we truly put our effort and energy into doing things the way that God would have us to do, we will either attain a good portion of becoming wholistic or at least we will have God there in a big way to get us through whatever His will is for our life. The bottom line is, there is no good way to live “Life on Planet Earth” without a relationship with God Almighty. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ( **right-relatedness**) and all the rest will be added unto you!

I guess what I am trying to say is there are plenty of reasons to live the kind of life that God would want you to without adding fear to the mix. If you need fear to motivate you, then there are a whole bunch of “Brick and Mortar” buildings with religious names on them that will gladly let you join them. There is a thing called the U.S. Military that is always looking for a “few good men”. God will not be mocked. We will all reap what we sow. There will be “Hell to pay”. The only thing is, whatever portion of Hell there might be, it will be corrective, not punitive. We will all be judged, and thankfully *mercy triumphs over judgement.*

Jesus is our Good Sheperd. He will lead us into **all Truth**. He also came to set us free. Free from the law of sin and death. Free from bondage. As a missionary preacher kid, no one put me in more bondage than the “Brick and Mortar Church”. Where two or three are gathered in His name, that is my kind of Church. I like being an organic “cage free”, “free range Christian”. If your local “Brick and Mortar Church” is fulfilling your needs, then I say “God Bless You” and enjoy the journey. I am convinced we will end up in the same place. Oh Happy Day!

**Maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus!**

P.S.

I spoke with my dad a lot about things that he might want to share at his memorial service. The top thing on his list would be to make sure that everyone would know how much he loved Romans 11:32. He felt that it is the penultimate verse in the whole Bible.

Romans 11:32 (RSV) “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.”

Romans 11:32 (NET) “For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them all.”

So, Romans 11:32 says that “God may have mercy on **ALL** of us.”

Then he loved to point out James 2:13 (NKJV) where it says: “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.**”