

GOD IS ON TRIAL BY MANKIND!

It sounds kind of strange when put this way. Yet it is a reality. Of course, mankind judging God is a hopeless situation at best. Even if someone does decide God is in the wrong, what can he possibly do about it? It kind of reminds me of a poster I used to have. It read as follows. ***"There are two foundational factors to human enlightenment. (1) There is a God. (2) You are not him."*** The bottom line is, even if you wrongly decide God is not fair, the fact remains He is still God, and you are not. Yet mankind constantly has questioned, "Why does God allow evil in the world? If He truly loves us, certainly He would not allow such awful things to happen to the innocent." As God does allow this, people often further question, "Who is God that He should judge us? Is that fair?"

Ultimately people judge God by declaring that He is not good and He is not fair. Ironically, the ones judging Him are not nearly as good or fair as He is. God loves us so much that He himself suffered and died on a cross so we could eventually be with Him in a place where there are no more tears or pain (John 3:16, Acts 20:28, Revelation 21:4).

Long ago, people put God on trial and chose to crucify the one responsible for many miracles. Jesus healed people and taught about love and still He was put to death. Talk about injustice! Jesus was without sin, and He was subjected to a sham of a trial, mocked, beaten, and tortured! Yet God does not give any of us what we deserve; if he did, we would ALL be in Hell right now. Anytime that a person spends outside of Hell is an example of the pure grace of God. What makes us think that God owes us anything?

The person who is suffering the loss of a dear one, or the long-term effects of some harsh physical or emotional trauma, finds no satisfactory pat answer that will bring comfort. I think people in those situations need a hug much more than they need a lesson in theology! They don't necessarily really want an answer, even when they ask for one. Rather what they are often seeking is comfort, or an undoing of the wrong they believe has been done.

I remember being angry at God when my mom died. I felt as though He should have made her live long enough for her to accept Him. I was standing on a fallen tree yelling at God. The irony of it all is that several months before this, I prayed for this tree to fall over because I needed a bridge. I had previously asked my landlord if I could cut it down to cross the creek to my home. I was told "No", and that perhaps I should go home and pray about it. I did pray and the tree came up with the roots, fell across the creek right where I needed it and it did not break in the middle! As I was standing on this tree yelling at God, these words came to me, so loudly and clearly. It couldn't have been made clearer even if the words were audible: **"Even if she did reject me, is that reason for you to?"** This ended my little tantrum!

I am reminded of *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, a song written by Joe South and made famous by country singer Lynn Anderson. At times, the rose garden is nothing but thorns and weeds. All the roses seem to be dead, and it has been bitter cold and gray with no hope of sunshine. The seasons come and go with no change for the better. It seems that as soon as we start to get back on top of things life slams us to the ground, kicks us in the teeth and laughs. It does not seem to matter that we are pursuing the Lord the best we can. We may try to comfort ourselves, reminding ourselves that Job suffered trials, and Jesus Himself was crucified. But when we compare ourselves to any person in the Bible, we find ourselves lacking. We judge ourselves and despair. "God disciplines those whom he loves" (Hebrews 12: 6); perhaps we deserve this? Alternatively, it is advised to "Consider it all joy when you enter various trials" (James 1:2) because such experiences "produce endurance." These are not real comforting words when you are drowning in the sea of hopelessness. Sure, you can focus on the fact that there are those who are even worse off than you, but what comfort is that? Are we to find comfort in the fact that some seem to suffer more than we? That seems cruel. Rather we pity them as well whom we cannot help because we are not even capable of helping ourselves.

God has not promised us a life with no pain. In fact, we are promised a life of hardship (Job 5:6-8, John 15:19 and 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, Acts 14:22). The very first person murdered in human history was Abel and he was the righteous one with whom the Lord was pleased! All of Jesus' disciples were martyred for their faith, except John who was exiled to Patmos. Paul, even before he was beheaded, did not lead an easy life and he served God to the best of his ability.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28: "Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches."

Most of us cannot say that we suffered nearly as much as the Apostle Paul, nor can we say we served the Lord as diligently. So where is the fairness in that? How could Paul maintain an attitude of praise? Was he stupid, crazy, or what?

Many men of God in the Bible praised and worshipped the Lord despite suffering because they understood His nature and the final outcome. God's perspective often differs significantly from that of most people.

Many things in this life do not seem fair. We may question why God allows some to have incredible amounts of blessings while it seems that every step of others is cursed. **Could it be that after this life everything is totally compensated?** The Bible does tell us of heavenly rewards. Could it be that these eternal rewards can compensate for the awful sufferings in this world? Can the retarded in this life to come be more blessed than the gifted intellectual? Can the poor and destitute be more blessed than the rich? Are the disadvantages that we have in this life compensated in the life to come? How surprised will we really be that God rewards some more than others in heaven? Yes, the rewards will vary in heaven. (Corinthians 3:10-15).

The punishments in Hell vary as well. How else could some receive greater damnation or condemnation than others? (Matthew 23: 14, Mark 12: 40, Luke 20: 47)

Let's take a short walk through some Scripture to find some answers. First, we will look at the short-sightedness of our questioning God in the first place. Then we will move onto an explanation of why we must deal with evil. Then finally and most importantly, we'll see God's radically different way of looking at things.

Isaiah 64:8: "But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand."

Jeremiah 18:1-10: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, 'Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I shall announce My words to you.' Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so, he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does' declares the LORD. 'Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.'"

Romans 9:14-24: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?' **On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."

As originally stated, there are two facts here. (1) There is a God; (2) We are not Him! Who are we to argue with God? He made us, and He has the right to do with us whatever He wishes. Even if you disagree with His decision, there is absolutely nothing that you can do about it. He possesses all power, and we do not!

Mankind may want to judge God, but the reality of it all is the opposite. God will indeed judge all of mankind. All of us are guilty by His standard and deserving of death. Yet this loving God who demands complete justice also provided a way out for all who want it under His terms.

Romans 3:23-24: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...”

Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ezekiel 33:11: "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'"

Here we see that God will indeed judge, because he is a God of justice. Still, He pleads with them to turn, so that He is not forced to do so!

John 3:16-21: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Revelation 20:11-15: “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And 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.”

Scripture declares that God will indeed judge, yet He provided a way of escape for us through Christ Jesus. Obviously, we are not able to judge God, nor to do anything about it if we do.

Still, some would question why God, although so powerful, does nothing about all of the injustice. Why would he allow a small to child to be brutally raped and murdered? We cannot argue that God does not allow such awful things because looking around we see that He has allowed it. ***However, delayed justice is still justice.*** Eternity in Hell is far worse than anything that we could inflict on the condemned. As mentioned earlier there are varying degrees of punishment in Hell.

The problem exists in the first place because God gave us a free will. Mankind has always chosen to sin. We act in a manner contrary to our creator's loving guidance: we rebel just because we can! When we rebel against God, there are always consequences. You can be forgiven, yes, but that does not mean you have escaped all the consequences.

We can choose to steal and then later ask forgiveness. We may even receive forgiveness not only from the Lord, but from the person from whom we stole. You can still be prosecuted and spend time in jail; in some circumstances, even if the person that you wronged declines to pursue a course of action. The State can still prosecute you because the law was broken.

The ramifications of our sin go far beyond this. Mankind's choices have affected all of creation (Romans 8:19-22). The death of plants and animals, sickness, and disease are all part of the ramifications of the sin of mankind. Still in our warped way of thinking we blame God because there are consequences for rebelling against His loving kindness and infinite wisdom. Consider the child who runs away from a loving home when he does not get his way, only to find hunger, cold, and despair is what he ran to. Should he blame the parents that he is now cold, hungry and desperate?

Which of us can say that we have not added to the problem by rebelling against God in some way or another? Which of us can say we have never wronged another person? Should the line of judgment from God only be drawn where we have not been as bad as another? Would God be correctly dealing out justice by turning a blind eye to our sin and not another's? Let there be no mistake — no sin will go without answering to perfect justice. The only way any of us can survive is through God's grace and mercy provided through Jesus Christ. Mankind's free will leads to sin and its consequences, resulting in constant wrong choices. We are extremely fortunate that God is willing to delay His judgment so that we have the time to repent and turn to Him for forgiveness!

He is a loving God, and therefore He does not force Himself on us. He allows us to reject Him even though He knows it is a poor choice. We ourselves experience love from others and we cannot force that love. Why should we think that God would be pleased with a bunch of robots that loved Him only because they had no choice in the matter? It would be wrong for us to try to force someone to love us. It would be equally as wrong if God forced us to love Him. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)

Some have mistakenly misquoted Scripture, saying God is guilty of allowing us to go through hardships that are more than we can bear. They point out the one who committed suicide saying there was obviously more than that person could bear. That is a misuse of what that passage really says:

1 Corinthians 10:12-14: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

This passage is saying that God will not allow "temptation" so great that you cannot handle it, without also providing a way to escape the temptation to sin. It is not God's fault that we choose to sin rather than fleeing from it. God did not promise that we would never encounter some extreme difficulties in our life — but Scripture does show that He will be there to help us through them.

THERE IS SOMETIMES PURPOSE IN SUFFERING THAT IS GOOD

2 Corinthians 7:10: “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

This godly sorrow resulted in salvation. Often you hear testimonies from people who are broken and finally turning to the Lord. Thus, they are gaining salvation and an eternity in the future with no more tears or pain.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10: “For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.”

This despair caused them to no longer trust in their own strength, but rather to trust in God instead. By trusting in Him instead of our own strength we are far better off.

James 1:2-4: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Here we are told trials produce endurance, making us more complete. Remember the old phrase often used to encourage us to exercise: “No pain, No gain!” Well, this phrase seems applicable spiritually as well.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Here we are told what we deep-down already know: We can be of more comfort to others who are suffering if they know we really understand because we have gone through the same thing.

Romans 8:28: “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.”

I mentioned earlier that people like Paul could have easily said that life had dealt them a bad hand. Yet despite all the suffering and injustice that was dealt them, they maintained an attitude of praise and worship. Why? I believe it is because they had real insight to the nature of God and the outcome of things in eternity.

God takes a radically different view of things than most of mankind. It is in this view that I believe we can find peace and comfort during our hardships. It is beyond our own strength and the perspective is on eternal things instead of the storm around us. Much like when Peter walked on water; he was fine until he focused on the storm instead of the Lord. The moment he took his eyes off the Lord and focused on the storm he sank (Matthew 14:24-33) Remember all the bad things that happened to the Apostle Paul that we previously read about in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28? Consider what this same man said in the following passages.

Romans 8:16-18: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

2 Corinthians 4:16-17: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”

Philippians 3:8: “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”

Wait a minute, Paul; they threw rocks at you until they thought you were dead! They beat you several times with a whip! They made you a prisoner for speaking the truth. You were shipwrecked more than once. One of these times you spent twenty-four hours floating in the sea. Another time you were shipwrecked, and you got out gathering wood to help warm the survivors, only to be bitten by a poisonous snake. You call that “momentary light affliction” that has no comparison to what awaits in glory? You compare your losses in your former prestigious position in Judaism as nothing but garbage in comparison?

WOW!!! What kind of insight must this man have concerning God and Heaven to make such a radical statement as this!! What would cause this former non-believer and persecutor of the church to feel this way? Consider what Paul said in the following letters:

Galatians 1:11-13: “For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it.”

2 Corinthians 12:2-10: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows — was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul had some insight that most do not. He was not taught by man but received revelations from the Lord himself. He got to see for himself what people only wonder about. This same man suffered far more than most of us ever will in our entire lives. His view of it all is that there is no comparison to losses, suffering, and injustices here on earth when viewed what waits in the life to come!!!

I don't know about you, but I find great comfort in that! Now, that is a solid reason to maintain hope despite the storm!

THE LORD HAS A STRANGE WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS!

Mark 12:41-44: “And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

Imagine being present at the scene. We get impressed with large sums of money — observing someone give such a small amount as the woman did, we might think, “Why bother? Such a small amount won’t help.” Yet her gift excited Jesus so much that He called His disciples over to take notice and gave her great praise. What great giving!

We who at the judgment day would like to hear the Lord say, “Well done my good and faithful servant” would do well to remember that the Lord weighs things quite differently than the world around us. If the Lord gave this widow great praise over the religious leaders and the wealthy that were there at the time, don't you think He will be consistent and give her great praise and reward in Heaven? At that time, it appears this poor widow faced significant disadvantages. I suspect she is not at any disadvantage now! The hand we are dealt with here has no bearing on our ability to be rewarded in heaven.

God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)!

Matthew 26:7-13: “a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table. But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, ‘Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.’ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For the poor you have with you always; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her.’”

In this scene we see that the disciples are upset. What a waste of money! Yet the Lord praised her for the motive of her heart!

Luke 6:35: "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."

Love your enemies? Lend and expect nothing in return? That will not go over well in our culture and our business world. Still the Lord tells us about our reward for this will be great!

Matthew 10:41-42: "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward."

Giving a child a cup of cold water might seem insignificant by our standards. Yet Jesus says such an act will not go without reward! Yet remember He was not impressed with those who were giving great sums of money in the verse mentioned earlier.

Tell me if this next passage does not sound exactly the opposite of what the world will tell you”

Luke 6:20-26: “And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

Hebrews 10:32-36: “But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”

This passage hardly sounds fair. They experienced conflict and suffering — yet they showed sympathy to prisoners. Next their possessions are seized. Then there is a reward, but the reward is unknown to the world, because it happens in a realm that is beyond their grasp!

The point of all of this is simple: do not judge your situation just by what you see around you, or with what abilities or resources that you think you have. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers! Joseph later ended up overseeing all the land. Joseph later told his brothers “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). What, was seemingly a terrible injustice, God turned completely around!

Daniel was also a prisoner with seemingly no hope for his future! God placed him in charge of the kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar. Esther was a nobody who became Queen and saved the Jewish people in her day. Haman, who tried to have Mordecai killed, and even built the gallows upon which to have Mordecai hanged ended up being hung upon the gallows that he built (Book of Esther). Jonah, who rebelled against God, surely thought there was no more hope when he was swallowed by the great fish. Yet that was not the end for him. When we think it is too late — think again. When we think there is no hope — think again. Nothing in our lives today is based solely on our circumstances or abilities, when serving a God who has no limits. What may first appear to be a great disadvantage, or wrong suffering may lead to blessings and comfort beyond your imagination in the life to come.

What we see as an injustice to ourselves, or an unfair advantage to others, will not necessarily end in what we see in this life. The outcome may take place in this life, or in the life to come. But make no mistake — God is not fooled by clever cover-ups. He will both judge and reward by the actual thoughts and intentions of our hearts. We are all guilty but can be declared righteous through Jesus Christ. The rewards of the Christian depend upon what they do with what God has given them. Individuals who possess greater wealth or resources in this life will be held to higher standards of accountability in the life to come. There are no disadvantaged ones when it comes to God’s realm of justice and reward.

God also seems to be consistent in rising the lowly. Jesus sought out the most unlikely to be friends with and to use to spread the Gospel. Many of the religious leaders who were looked up to and respected were the ones that Jesus harshly rebuked! When Jesus was born, the announcement was made to shepherds, not kings. Those who society has rejected are the ones who Jesus chose to hang out with. Jesus praised those who seemed like “nobodies” or “rejects”, and He often rebuked those whom others looked up to. In Jesus’ day a woman’s testimony meant nothing in a court. Yet He first appeared to women when He rose from the dead. Jesus is both God and the final judge. He views things differently than our society does!

John 5:22: “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son...”

Isaiah 55:8-9: “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Proverbs 3:5-8: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.

I would like to share with you a short story. There was a little boy who was poor. His clothes were clean, but they were tattered and worn. He went to a Christmas party where there were many rich children who were well-dressed, had money in their pockets, and appeared to be having lots of fun! It came time for everyone to open presents. The little boy watched with wide eyes and jaw dropped as all the well-dressed kids opened one huge present after another. Each gift was wrapped in sparkly paper, decorated with huge bows. The little boy was amazed at the tremendous gifts that the other kids were getting sailboats, cars, and trucks. If you can name, it then it was there.

Finally, it came time for the little boy to receive his presents! He could hardly wait! He was handed one small package wrapped in plain brown paper. He stood in disbelief and great disappointment as he looked back at all the wonderful gifts the others had received. He could not bear to even open the present because of his disappointment.

Then I could hear God tell me to open the box. As I looked around at all the other wonderful gifts, I still did not want to open the box. God repeated, "Open the box!" I finally tore open the plain brown wrapper and lifted the lid off the tattered little box and much to my amazement GOD was in the box!!!!!! He had given me Himself!!!! Then I realized the others had nothing, and I had everything!

No, I am not a little boy, but the Lord used this illustration to show me how rich I am! As I write this, by the world's standards I am a complete failure! A loser! I've worked all my life with nothing to show for it. No great accomplishments and lots of regrets.

Yet I have something that many will never have or understand. Just the same I am blessed! I am reminded of the prayer of the Unknown Soldier. I do not remember exactly how it goes, but it ends like this:

"I got nothing that I had asked for, but more than I had hoped for.
I among all men am most richly blessed!!!!"