

Christian mental health after trauma

FROM VICTIMHOOD TO WARRIOR



Christian mental health for long-term trauma victims:

From Victimhood to Warrior

CHAPTERS:

- Introduction
- The World Is a Battlefield
- The Church: A Feast for Oppressors
- How Did We Become Victims
- How Does Victims Communicate
- The Difference: Being a Victim and Victimhood.
- How Victimhood Oppresses You
- Learned Helplessness
- Victim blaming
- Gods Solution to Sin
- How Satan Uses the Bible to Subdue Us
- The Good Shepherd
- Victimhood As a Weapon
- The Victorious Christian
- Practical Exercise Towards Freedom
- Restore Trust
- Why He Allows Difficulties
- Church Tribulations
- Final Victory
- Afterword

Introduction:

Society loves to put people in boxes. Usually, the “boxes” do not fit, and so the invention of new mental diagnoses is ever-growing. They want people to not think there is a norm or a “right,” yet at the same time, the many names for mental conditions say the opposite. It reflects the idea of a behavior that is normal and another that is considered abnormal. Strangely, it is like trying to accept something they don’t accept. Rarely can they heal the broken; they can only lessen the symptoms. Instead of finding fault with how things are viewed, they will claim they are unfixable, which is why they can’t fix them.

Modern society pushes people to identify as their sins, to identify as their wounds, and to identify as their coping mechanisms during and after trauma. A mental diagnosis can give the illusion of peace because it gives temporary relief in how to explain themselves to others. The diagnosis becomes an excuse for not fitting in and not mastering life as others do. Feeling that their chaotic inner stress has a name and that they cannot help it. Accepting their fate and their condition can help ease the struggle with acceptance from others. A diagnosis can, therefore, reduce some of the stress but not all. Many in these situations accept medications to relieve excessive stress. A Christian who struggles with mental health issues can end up stuck between a rock and a hard place. Irreligious mental health workers often give advice that contradicts Biblical advice. The Bible sites hard judgment upon those who trade with “pharmacies”, drug medicines, and the Bible urges us to stay away from stimulants that keep us from being sober and spiritually awake (Rev. 18:23; 1. Pet.5:81; Thess.5:6-8, Eph.5:18; 1.Cor.6:19-20; Gal.5:20).

Using drugs to cure mental health issues is for many Christians not an option. Alternative medicine is regularly rejected by accepted society, and thus it is hard for many Christians to know what to do. The Bible is very open and clear about human hurt, but it does not give people different mental diagnoses. Yet, many of the biblical characters suffer from what today would be called deep depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and even madness. They suffered many types of abuse. Many had their freedom taken from them and were suppressed or oppressed. Many suffered great traumatic experiences, and part of the Bible stories is how they dealt with them.

The Bible might appear simple in explaining mental health crises and the consequences that come with them because it does not lock people into an incurable diagnosis. Rather, it says that even if someone has struggled from birth or believes they are “born this way”, they can be “born again,” figuratively speaking. If there is life, there is hope. (Joh.3:3)

God powerfully demonstrated this when Abraham's wife Sarah was too old to bear children, when her womb no longer could produce life. God waited until it was thought to be impossible, and then He brought life back to her, and Sarah had her son. The son was named Isaac, which, translated, means “laughter”. Sarah went from grief and stress to laughter because of the miracle God performed in her.

For someone who does not believe in God, a higher power with the ability to help humans is nonsensical, and they will treat it as such. Those who do believe and have experienced God do not have to accept that their case is lost. A lot of mental health issues involve sin, and Christ claims He can deliver us from our sins. That He can set us free (John 8:34–36).

The Bible says there is hope for everyone, and instead of telling people to identify as their issue, it explains we are something more than what happened to us, we are not what happened to us. We are more than the sin we have committed. We are not our sin, we are not our coping mechanisms, and we are not our defense mechanisms. Furthermore, we are something greater; we have potential that we have yet to unravel, and our true identity is suppressed by sin and harm, and God wants to free the real

us from the cobweb we are stuck in. In God's eyes, we are an undetonated bomb of potential. He knows what we can be and become if we are not held back.

Did God do something so extreme that He commissioned a woman who had been said to have been possessed by demons with the task of being the first to tell people the good news about His resurrection? (Luk.8:2; Mark 16:9; Mat.28:7). He did. What a powerful move. She, just like death, seemed impossible to turn over. Yet, Christ did both.

Did Jesus assign a former madman to preach the gospel to his family and town? (Luke 8:39) The last one anyone would listen to, God sent to preach to the well-functioning others.

God is not afraid of those who suffer from mental health issues; He does not hide them or tell them to be quiet. Rather, He untangles them from their mental prison and gives them trust, love, and responsibilities.

God believes in us, and He asks us to believe in Him and each other.

This book is meant to show how the Bible deals with mental health, the Biblical solution, and how to practically find healing through faith.

To most people in the academic world, this is a dangerous approach, as the Bible is viewed as questionable and God non-existent. Yet, the intention behind this book is not to tell people not to seek professional help; rather, it is a supplement to help a Christian navigate the many emotions they go through. Many Christians struggle with mental health and understanding why God allows it and how to view it. This book might help answer some of those questions.

- What does the Bible say the way out is? Is there one?
- Is it possible to be mentally ill and a true Christian at the same time?
- Why is there so much stigma among Christians regarding mental health?
- Why do many seem to get sicker when seeking help from church members?
- Why do so many feel trapped and abused all over again after joining a church?
- What are the misunderstandings many Christians often have regarding mental health?
- Are there practical ways the Bible says can help us on the path to recovery? How can we help ourselves?

These are the topics that we will investigate, and hopefully, it will help bring hope to the wounded or those trying to help the wounded. The book will not focus on diagnosis terminology but will concentrate on explaining human hurt and recovery within a biblical framework.

The book is mostly directed at Christians struggling with childhood trauma or long-term trauma as adults.

To help someone stuck in victimhood, to help someone who is struggling with mental health and their faith, or someone who wishes to understand those who struggle and how to help them in a better way. In no way does this book contain all issues and problems, but it does address the Biblical solution to hurt people no matter the reason they are hurt.

Disclaimer:

The book is written by me, a trauma survivor who has lived the pain and complications following it, and my strength is following the advice written in this book. I also have experience helping and speaking with other Christians with mental health issues, and I have worked for a few years in a mental health facility as an environmental worker.

For the past 26 years, I have worked as a Bible teacher both outside and inside the church and done several humanitarian aid trips to orphanages and health institutions in other countries.

This is a summary of some of my many life experiences and biblical studies, from which the topic in this book is inspired.

The book is not meant to compete with treatments provided by professional health workers. It is written from one Christian to another, from one long-trauma survivor to another, from one trying to help others to others wishing to help others, from one human to another as brotherly/sisterly encouragement. The take is from a biblical view and not from a mental health professional academic view.

The World Is a Battlefield

- *This chapter addresses social reasons for helping victims and what does not work.*
- *It also explains the churches sometimes complicated view on human emotions.*

Equality's ethics dilemma

The world is a battlefield, with wounded everywhere. Everyone handles it differently. Some are more wounded than others.

Hurt people, hurt people. It is a chain reaction that won't stop. Everyone is guilty of something; everyone is also a victim in one way or another.

Sometimes bad behavior is the result of trauma and carrying the burden of others' sin. Issues do not come from nothing. Anger does not come from nothing. Victims can be unstable and a burden to their surroundings. Many victims are programmed to harm and don't know any other way. Sin is contagious; like an airborne disease, it is easily transmittable. Sin is a chain reaction affecting the body, soul, and society.

Some are more harmed than others and struggle to find peace and hope. They want to be good and do good, but they can't seem to break a destructive behavior pattern. Others are trapped in abusive relationships. Trapped in a negative loop, many struggle to take care of themselves. They can't stop hurting or move on. They are constantly triggered and re-wounded. Their scars affect every interaction and every aspect of their lives. They don't know how to get well, and their behavior only causes new traumatic experiences. Even ordinary day-to-day confrontations can have a devastating impact. It is a sad fact to state, but many victims are found unlikable for reasons that further establish their struggles. In a society where opportunities are equal, there is still only an illusion of equality. Not all can take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Mental health issues are a real handicap that prevents people from moving forward.

To make the point figurative. You may put a plate of food at an equal distance between two people and tell them they have the same privilege of eating it. If one is paralyzed and the other has well-functioning legs, one will struggle to get to the meal, if at all. If they make it, by the time they reach it, the other person will have eaten it first. Likewise, many just don't have the right cognitive tools to handle what to others is easy and logical. For many with traumatic experiences, even what appears good can be perceived as a danger due to the bodily and mental consequences that follow. Then, too, the good things presented might be a struggle to accept or receive.

There are also those who don't even know why they are depressed and feel worthless; they don't understand how they have been wounded or by whom. Emotional damage is so complex that it can take years to understand what actually happened or how they were wounded. All they feel is an anxiety that appears random and misplaced. Our subconscious mind sometimes picks up on things our conscious mind does not.

No case is less important than another if the result and harm are the same. For too long, people have been evaluated more by what has happened to them than by the harm it has caused, and thus many do not receive the help they need. Any human broken down is a broken human, no matter how it happened or who did it. If somebody cannot cope with life, blaming them is hardly helpful and will rarely bring about a change.

Just like non-religious people, many religious people across different Christian denominations struggle with how to address people who hurt others and hurt themselves.

Every so often, the victim is blamed or made responsible for their hurt. Every so often, the wrongful deeds are covered up.

In society, therapy has become a popular method to help people find understanding, and many Christians seek help there, hoping to get the tools to heal.

This can sometimes be problematic as non-Christian mental health professionals do not always follow the principles of God and often even discourage faith and Christian virtue, leaving them in a place where inner values and their healing seem to be in conflict with each other. Some therapists will even suggest that their Christian faith is the problem behind their feelings of being trapped. Thus, some who seek help feel forced to choose between the two. It is a fact that many who struggle have experienced abuse by professed Christian people, and so Christianity is in large part blamed rather than the abuser's expression of their religion. The Nobel Peace Prize winner, bishop, and human rights activist Desmond Tutu once said: "Religion is like a knife: you can either use it to cut bread or stick it in someone's back".

His statement is still relevant. It is hardly going to change the world to "blame the knife" or the existence of it. You must give accountability to the person holding it.

Although this is not the case with everyone, it has been observed that several people seeking help with psychologists become self-absorbed while trying to find a solution to their issues. They are taught to put themselves first and to resist anyone demanding anything self-sacrificing from them as someone in the wrong. This attitude does not go well with Christ's teachings and overall social interactions. Solving past issues by making everything about us, even the entitlement that everyone should adjust their speech and actions to our needs, would make us terrible Christians. When we have been hurt, our tolerance can be adjusted wrongly, and so following it can lead to unreasonable expectations of others. While it is important to respect and love oneself to be able to care for others, there is a balance that is needed in any social society. If everyone puts their needs first, conflict is sure to ensue.

Countless modern studies from non-religious researchers strongly suggest that people who help others are the happiest people. Seeking to make others happy is what makes us happy, which counterfeits a good deal of modern advice on seeking happiness through selfish choices and indulgences.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/traversmark/2021/04/26/happiness-comes-from-making-others-feel-good-rather-than-ourselves-according-to-a-new-study/?sh=55a6afeb2fd9>

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/wanting_to_help_others_could_make_you_happier_at_work

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-to-be-happy-by-giving-to-others/>)

For someone who is depressed and unhappy, constantly putting themselves first might not make them happier or more content in the long run. Always putting what others need first can also be exhausting, so finding the perfect balance is important. People interact; it is unavoidable, so no one can live and expect their surroundings to always be customized to themselves and their needs. It is a self-destructive social phenomenon; if others are to adjust to our needs, then we should logically and morally think it is our duty to adjust to theirs, or we will exhaust others to avoid getting exhausted ourselves. We are forced to consider that most of the time, our rights can't always come first, even if we are mentally struggling.

Life is about giving and taking. Blessings and sacrifices.

When do we give too much of ourselves, and when do we give too little? Finding the balance can be difficult. A Christian can be tempted to give too much, thinking it is a Christian duty and "burning the candle at both ends".

Facts or feelings.

If you have experienced trauma. Finding the Christian answer to healing and dealing with different types of trauma can be hard because there are so many wrong practices within the churches regarding these things.

Sometimes feelings of any sort can be viewed as sinful, and therefore the feelings are suppressed. Many think they do God service by not demanding justice, by not fighting for what is right, and pretending not to be affected by others' bad behavior. The unspoken rule is that the less of an emotional reaction we have, the more tolerable and good Christians we are. It is self-deceptive because it is impossible not to be affected by cruelty. Those who do not react emotionally to their surroundings are people who lack empathy, and so if Christians are encouraged to not show feelings, they naturally become less empathetic. A Christian virtue is being emphatic, and so naturally we see two conflicting ideas when it comes to how emotions are viewed. Yet because these unspoken rules regarding emotions as sinful often manifest in churches, many find Christians unsympathetic or even patronizing. If you are conceived as less "holy" because you don't control your emotions, you will feel patronized by the others who seem to do it. Thus, it creates an atmosphere of hypocrisy and pretend goodness, where no one wants to address the real issues. If having emotional reactions is regarded as a sin, then no one will want to show their emotions, feeling it would label them as less spiritual Christians. In such a toxic environment, we also get proxy Christians who resemble mothers with Munchhausen syndrome by proxy, who need others to be pathetic for them to get attention as superior Christians. The victim of such people may feel loved until they realize the Christian love bomber needs them to remain pathetic for the relationship to work.

In an unhealthy church, our emotions become the sin and the problem instead of what is causing them to be stirred up. It is very common in any sect-like environment. There, you are taught to ignore any emotional warning signs and show your obedience, detached from your common sense and thinking. Going to any church that handles problems in this way means watching people be wounded and traumatized. They may appear to do good, but they do not.

On the right side of the political spectrum, little sympathy and even bullying have become ways to argue against overweight people, against those who are oversensitive, against the uneducated, or against those struggling with poverty and even race and cultural issues. "If you have problems, you made them, and you have to fix them" is an attitude that may seem well intended but is also partly ignorant.

One right-side commentator with a great following once said, "Facts don't care about your feelings" to which another responded, "Feelings don't care about your facts". Both statements are true, but neither fact nor feelings alone can heal the broken. Both must be combined. Although human emotions are not always adjusted correctly, it is still our feelings that help us process and evaluate information and reject other information. Dismissing feelings is therefore deceptive or self-deceptive at best. When humans shut down their intellect, they act on instincts like animals do, but the same is true if we shut down our emotions. Because emotions are also intellect. Without emotional intellect, we will also act more like animals, selfishly and on instinct. The evidence of that is seen in psychopaths and narcissists, who shut down their empathy for other people's feelings and sometimes even their own. They are destructive and create a hostile environment. There would be no ideal world without feelings, and "facts" can never be detached from them. God created the human body, where intellect and feelings work together to create a being "in His image". God is a God of facts, law, and order. Yet, it was His feelings for man that saved us and revealed God's perfection as a leader. His throne consists of both mercy and law. Mercy and empathy go together. "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made" (Psalm 116:5) God has compassion for

mankind, and He praises those of us who have compassion for our fellow men. “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Matt.5:7)

Surprisingly enough, it is impossible to keep God's law without using or employing our feelings. It says: “*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*” (Deut.6:5, See also Mark.12:30). It's through love and admiration—our emotions—that we worship and connect with God.

God says, “*I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts*”. This illustrates perfectly how both the heart and mind are needed to be faithful. (Heb.8:12)

When God judges the guilty who refuse to change their ways, He is doing it to protect the innocent. His anger can be aroused at injustice, which in turn makes God interfere when He sees suffering. God has a law, and although it is the foundation of His reign, emotions are the foundation of the law. It is because stealing hurts and harms another's emotional wellbeing that God has a law against stealing, and so on. To be happy and excel, we need emotions, and when we have emotions, we need protection from them being damaged. This is the foundation of God's moral laws, so that one person's happiness cannot legally be built upon another's misery.

Our emotions are part of our intellect and our ability to tell right from wrong. There is no true intellect without emotions. Yet if emotions are detached from factual intellect, they are running wild and untamed. On the other side, if intellect is run without emotions, it cannot correctly distinguish right from wrong. Both are living “by the flesh” and inspire sinful behavior (Rom.8:1). If we think living by the “flesh” and having emotions are the same thing, we will fear our emotions are sin and treat them as such. Many Christians do. They think hell is waiting for them if they “feel too much”. If we understand that “living by the flesh” means just as much detaching feelings from facts as detaching facts from feelings, it might help us see the term “living by the flesh” differently. As Paul said: “If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1.Cor.13:2)

Let's make a figurative illustration to illustrate the point.

If you hit another person, it is the receiver's pain and hurt look that create the understanding that the action is wrong. This is how we learn right from wrong from infancy on. It is how we understand good interactions before we understand words. We read emotions. Seeing and experiencing reactions to our behavior. This is also where early trauma can hit hard later on; if we are given toxic feedback, many learn the wrong emotional language. The lack of consistency in response can create this uncertainty. For instance, if the mother praises the child for doing something and the child repeats it another day, she gets angry. It is not normal to remember these years of our lives, but the emotional language we learn can stay with us forever. Babies and toddlers, before talking, can comprehend and recognize fear, joy, hostility, and many other emotions just by looking at someone. For instance, a baby comforting their mother. Emotions are an important part of our growth and intelligence.

Emotions work together with facts to help us be the best people we can be. However, others pain does not always give a right understanding of who is in the wrong. If you hit someone and harm them, it can indicate the action was wrong, but the feelings of the wounded must not be separated from the facts to create the right understanding. Hitting and afflicting someone that way is not always wrong. A person who is wounded is not always in the right.

If you get angry and hit someone who is trying to kidnap someone's child, the action is correct, even though the receiver felt pain and looked hurt. Thus, you cannot state as a fact that hitting someone is wrong based on the harm or the feelings of the recipient. Still, in one instance, the other's feelings are evidence the punch is wrong, and in the other it is not. It is like this with all kinds of “facts”. In one instance, anger is wrong; in the other, anger is correct. Therefore, you cannot state as a fact that anger is wrong or that hitting someone is wrong. For if one man's anger had not been aroused and he had

punched the other, a child would have been kidnapped. The fact therefore says that not the one who got the most harmed is the victim, but the one with the right motives and intentions.

The struggle people have with bureaucracy is its lack of ability to independently evaluate each situation. One law helps one but harms another. Many fall between stools. Occasionally, the very laws that were created to protect end up harming the innocent and defending the transgressors (Isa.10:1-2). This is because bureaucracies lack the ability to use emotions in the interpretation and use of the law. We see the same unfairness practiced by big companies, where the employees meeting the customers have no trust or right to make decisions based on what they perceive. Making the service many small business owners offer better and more docile. God's law is structured differently. God forbids the addition of additional laws to His own, as that prevents the principles of His law from being kept properly. Too many interpretations remove personal evaluation, responsibility, and growth. There were repeated standoffs between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes because of their additional laws, which they felt complimented God's law but instead complicated it. Because there was no more room to individually evaluate the fulfillment of the law in a given situation, God's law often seemed unfair and misplaced. Was a man who carried his bed on the Sabbath because he had just been healed the same as if a man were moving his bed from one house to another unnecessarily? According to the Pharisees and scribes, there was no difference. They did not consider the situation in which it was happening or the men's intentions for doing it. God's law said not to carry a burden on the Sabbath; it was their additional interpretational laws that said healing someone or carrying, for instance, a bed, was a burden. Jesus went by the original intention of the law; thus, the man carrying his bed while walking for the first time for nearly forty years while praising God for the deliverance from his illness, the real burden, was not disrespecting God's law. Jesus had many such confrontations with the Pharisees because he fulfilled God's law by interpreting it in a wider perspective.

God even states that too many laws and regulations cause people to stumble and fall (Isa.28:13). There must always be room for independent evaluation within a firm set of moral frameworks. If there are too many laws, that becomes almost impossible to do.

Human emotions are not a sin; emotions cannot be removed, and every so often they tell the truth when the apparent facts do not.

God's solution to harm and hurt is not to remove emotions, but to address what is causing them to be wrongly adjusted or harmed. Christians who think they give God glory by addressing the existence of emotions as a sin might be fooling themselves and others. No one who is told to subdue their emotions feels free, not even as a Christian. This is why God wants us to worship, sing, and rejoice in Him. It is our feelings that attach us to Him in a bond and help us experience joy as Christians. When it comes to science, even what we think of as facts are not God's facts. When God wanted to save Israel from the Egyptian army, He manipulated the natural laws to their advantage and divided the Red Sea so that they could cross it and be saved. When they were starving, He created an unnatural rain of food from heaven to provide for them. When Joshua needed daylight to win a critical battle, God made daylight throughout the night. Christ walked on water and made water into wine. There are many things that may appear unchangeable and factual in nature, but God put man's salvation and wellbeing above these laws. By making people feel seen and loved, God is willing to perform miracles. Although his moral laws are unchangeable, God's other laws can be temporarily worked on when circumstances make them threaten the same people they were meant to bless. When the disciples needed Jesus, He walked upon the water to get to them. Jesus said: *"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."* (John 7:24)

The intent of the law determines how it is upheld. Thus, Jesus said these words when the Pharisees had added many additional laws to God's Sabbath commandment. They allowed circumcision and would

even save an ox on that day, but claimed Jesus was not allowed to heal a man on the Sabbath. The point of the law was to bring men to a special weekly rest and connect them with God. Their additional law forbidding healing broke and prevented this intention. Christ's healing brought the man rest from his troubles, and in this way, he was in line with the purpose of the law. While the pharisees created the illusion that they kept the law, and that Christ broke it, it was really the other way around.

Christ uses God's laws to save and protect, while those who abuse them use them to control and divide. People who are hurt and wounded are not to be told their feelings are a problem and need to be silenced.

Even feelings out of control send a message. When a person goes to the doctor and tells them their arm hurts, it helps the doctor find out what is wrong with them. In the same way, people's expressions and feelings pinpoint the emotional harm. By allowing the expression of feelings, we can find the problem, help solve the issue, and thus bring healing if possible.

It is therefore Christian to consider people's feelings, to allow people's feelings, and to have feelings ourselves. Every church should have people who understand and interpret emotional language, as they will often experience traumatized and wounded people coming to seek God's help among them. Often, they have tried to get help everywhere else first and are still hurting and desperate.

People who are traumatized and wounded usually have a slightly different emotional language than those who have had fewer challenges in life. Not understanding the emotional language barrier causes unnecessary friction and division.

Although we are responsible for ourselves, some do not know how to take care of themselves. Healthy coping mechanisms are a gift given and taught in the first years of anyone's life. What seems easy to some is very hard for others. What one person does instinctively, the other has not learned and instead has learned a different set of instincts. When one child learns social and developmental skills, another child is trapped in a fight or flight response and is learning survival skills that are inappropriate when they enter a more functioning society.

To give a primitive example, let us say we have two families knocked back to the Stone Age living in each of their caves, having to start from scratch.

If one family is under constant threat by wild animals and competing tribes, their lives will consist mostly of defense, creating weapons, war training, and being scared. They will have less food and innovation, and they will have health issues tied to constant stress and a poor or wrong diet. Constant alertness can even lead to paranoia.

While another family without these threats can focus on building a good house, building relations, focusing on food, innovation, and enjoying life. If you now bring the two families together, there will be a marked difference in how they interact and deal with life, in what they think is important, and in temperament. And the family that was less threatened will feel the other family is too intense and not in contact with reality. Their behavior does not seem to fit their understanding of reality. The stressed family's communication might seem less friendly, more defensive, and therefore less likeable. The healthy family might seem less empathic, more ignorant, and more tendentious. The family that progressed might wonder why the others did not come up with the inventions and progress they have. They, too, will be tempted to think the others are less intelligent or lazy.

The family living in peace will also feel that all their success is due to the work they put in on building their house, their little infrastructure, their water system, and their fields of crops, and it is. What they don't see is that their success compared to the other families is also tied to their freedom from threats. Had they too lived with threats, their focus, and time would have been used differently. The friction between one family thinking they are better, and the other less approachable, makes them dislike each other and become at odds with each other.

Translating this “stone-age parable”, this is often the situation in the world today when we see some failing and others succeeding.

The opportunities in society may seem the same, but if one person is under constant threat or dealing with heavy mental challenges growing up, they will not have had the time to develop in a healthy, progressive way because they are busy surviving. We see children from troubled homes often fail to do well at school, and it is not because they are less intelligent. They more easily end up in conflicts because that is how they are used to interacting. Their alertness and defensiveness create distrust with others, and they will struggle to be accepted by those from harmonious homes and will find friends with others that struggle instead. Distrust will mirror distrust. Thus, they do not get out of the destructive cycle. When two teenagers turn 16, one from a troubled home and the other from a well-functioning home, they no longer have equal opportunities in an equal society because their development is at different stages, yet they are expected to handle the same life **decisions** and opportunities at the same time. One has learned skills their whole life that are now seemingly useless, and needs to learn from adulthood what others learn automatically as kids. Being set back and not provided with this opportunity, they “fall behind” and become losers in society. They lose self-confidence; they think something is wrong with them; they don’t think they can do it. Giving them extra time and a free education is deemed unfair by others who look at equality in numbers and appearance. Here, the benefits are a reward without regard for where you come from. Finally, it creates a “survival of the fittest” society, and those who fall behind because of struggle lose.

The God of the Bible is a very great defender of those whose backgrounds give them fewer opportunities to succeed, and he repeatedly tells those who are successful to help families that struggle. This is important for the overall success of a society. *“He that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (Pro.14:31)*

“He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor” (Psa 72:4).

Many understand that the prosperity gospel is shady, but they have an unspoken mental prosperity gospel that they practice in their everyday lives. That mentality is that the fewer issues you have, the closer you are to God. *But God says: “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Psa.34:18)*

When God explains the reasons behind the fall of Sodom and Jerusalem, how those struggling are treated is highlighted:

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Eze 16:49). “Strengthen the hand” means to help them find strength to cope in life. Give them respect and assistance. When people do not have an equal background, their opportunities are not equal, and God expects the stronger to help those who struggle to make it as well. These are God's principles. It is not about race, whether black or white. It is about an individual’s life experience and family background.

Paul compared a church to the human body, illustrating how all parts are important to make the body function. The same illustration can be used in a larger society. If there is a neglected or sick part, it will affect everyone. *“And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (1Co 12:23-25)

Can socialism reduce mental health issues and help equality?

Some might mistake these principles for the Bible favoring socialism or socialistic structures. It is not

unusual for people who have suffered trauma and have a mental health issue to dream about a socialistic utopia where wealth is distributed to the less fortunate. At first glance, it can seem like a good way to even out the social differences created because many suffer from trauma and mental health issues.

The Biblical society created by God was not socialistic in structure, where the government oversaw distributing the fruit of others' work to those less fortunate. While God is charitable and asks the same of His people, God's charity is meant to be a developing experience for both the giver and the receiver. By giving the successful the ability to see and act when they see others in need, God helps them develop humanitarian skills that resemble the image of God. Through being directly involved in how their means and their own hard work are used, they learn responsibility and receive the happiness only achievable when seeing the faces and interacting with those receiving the kindness. Just as this causes growth and happiness for the giver, the receiver learns to take on more responsibility. Both the giver and receiver feel like they have value. Seeing the helper or giver, rather than being handed help from a governmental institution, they experience love and understand the hard work and value behind the gift (of time or value) from the giver. A government goes by paragraphs and rules that might end up helping the wrong people and disregarding the more needy, handing out evenly to uneven families. Giving to thieves and punishing the honest.

When people are directly involved in their charity, it inspires self-value and character development in the receiver. If it goes well, not wanting to cause long-lasting burdens on the giver and understanding the sacrifice, the receiver will learn and try to be independent or be a giver themselves. Those who are managing life well and those who struggle need to see each other and learn from each other to create a good, developing society. Doing something for others makes people happy. It is, in part, the meaning of life. Selfishness is a negative spiral where you can never have enough and will never be satisfied. With governmental socialism, the benefit seen in the Bible is removed, and the faceless, emotionless government is depended upon, while taking money regardless of the situation and circumstances of both the giver and recipient. It ends character development for both parties and creates a selfish and exploitive society.

The biblical intelligent approach is disappearing in the west, where humanity is replaced with antisocial governmental institutions. Every so often, when a large catastrophe takes place, everyone joins forces to help each other out of the difficult situations. They pull each other out of flood water; they look for each other in earthquake ruined houses. They feed and clothe each other. Another man's child, wandering the streets after a tornado hit a town, is everyone's child. We humans have it in us, but this is the mentality that we need to have in everyday life as well. We are all each other's business. We are all each other's extended family. This should not just be visible during a threat or a disaster.

God's system is not socialism; it is giving the power and responsibility to love and care for each other to the people. God wants to empower our charity and social skills. To benefit both giver and receiver and to create an open, warm society where everyone gets a chance to restart if they have failed while feeling valued and respected in the process. God wanted all his people to own property, to belong, and to have a place to provide for themselves and work. A property the government could not take from them even if they did not pay taxes. And if one family really messed up and lost it, have society give it back to them in the next generation. Owning land that cannot be taken from them, regardless of circumstance, according to God's laws, is a human right. In the bible, the year properties were to be given back was called the year of Jubilee. Those in economic debt working in slave like conditions, without property, were to be freed and get their generational property back so their family could have a second chance. (Lev.25:8-13)

The government was not to own people's land or rights to it and redistribute others' work. In fact, God advised strongly against it when they asked for a king, because of the taxation needed to form a

governmental body. The more tax, the more the government grows in strength and the less freedom is given to the people. And people will become owned by the governmental body to make it work. This was never God's intention for a society (1.Samuel ch.8, v.10-18) We must not confuse governmental socialism with God's humanitarian welfare system. Socialism focuses on economics and Gods focuses on people's mental development and character through social interactions. For even those who have success need character development. Happiness and material wealth are not the same thing, even though many are fooled into believing they are. Human value, love, time, and charity are true wealth, and a socialistic society cannot re-distribute this, only the illusion of it. Socialism creates people who feel irresponsible for their fellow men.

Collective mental health

In some countries in the world that have had dictators, corrupt governments, war, famine, and the like, people have struggled for generations to be self-sufficient and prosper. Many such areas remain impoverished for generations, paralyzed and unable to use what is within their reach to reconstruct their society and help themselves out of poverty. Where war and corruption remain a threat, people can remain apathetic. Which is a threat response when "fight or flight" is not possible. When everything you live for is gone, the motivation and meaning is gone, this can cause problems in moving forward. If they remain in the state of victimhood not standing up for their right together, new subduing leaders' surface because when the people are stuck in victimhood, they can easily be subdued by different types of dictatorships.

Likewise, many households are war zones, and the children growing up in them can be compared to "war veterans". Then they are cast out into society and expected to act, behave, and handle opportunities the same way as anyone else. When they fail, they are usually blamed. Despite all this, a well-functioning family should not be punished for being well-functioning. If that were the solution, attacking those who function well with jealousy, financial punishment, and adversity would not elevate those who struggle to the other's success; rather, we would drag the others down. Those who are functioning well should be an example and inspiration, not the subject of hate. But because the well-functioning often look down on those who aren't, tension and contempt are created, which helps no one. God rewards those who do good and succeed with even more blessings, making doing good desirable. At the same time, he demands of them that they use their position and advantage to help those that are left behind. In this way, God does not bring the successful down; rather, He blesses them, yet He lets them know that with their success and blessings comes the responsibility to help their fellow man. Bear in mind that the success mentioned here implies not necessarily being rich financially, but also being rich in peace, love, courage, talents, and knowledge. This approach is meant to help pull everyone up rather than everyone down. God teaches us that society won't prosper because a family in it prospers. Society is dependent on the stronger helping the weak, or the weak will eventually ruin society for the strong. Everyone is dependent upon each other for greater peace and prosperity; everyone is connected, and thus everyone is everyone's business. You can be good all you want and teach your children to be good, but if the wretched kid from down the street harms your child, then you will no longer prosper as before and even start living in fear mode, draining you, and you will become more like the wretched kid. You may follow all the traffic rules and drive responsibly and never drink and drive, but you might still die because another driver did drink. So, society's prosperity is dependent on people helping people or others despair and struggles will at some point come back and take something from you through a chain reaction.

Individuals crash into each other in society all the time. It is hard for many to understand the stress and intensiveness or apathy coming from someone who has grown up with constant stress.

Pull yourself together?

Many religious people think that telling people “to pull themselves together” is the solution while ignoring the more profound issues, and for the most part, they hurt and even further harm those they want to change. They call it a “truth pill”, but if truth is mingled with cruelty, it will not have the desired effect. Truth is not just words; truth is words working together with actions and emotions. On the other side, many liberals seem to allow and support anything self-indulgent, thinking that if people can follow their every impulse and feeling, they will somehow get cured of all their problems. In part, they teach that following one’s feelings and sexual desires will create a utopia where all negative feelings end. The only threat to this utopia is criticism, and therefore any criticism must be violently quenched. This rarely leads to utopia and never has in the past, and the ones who don’t agree with them are blamed. They do not wish to examine if following one’s lust really is the way to solve emotional damage. Their quest for liberating lust does not cure mental health issues, and it is extremely self-absorbed.

The majority of the western world thinks the Bible is outdated. For Christians, it contains life-saving lessons. Although “mental health” is a modern expression not found in the Bible, the Bible does address mental health issues on an individual level and their wider effect on society. God does not ignore these issues, and He does give an answer to them, which is often ignored by even Christians. This book will investigate how the Bible views those who hurt and are wounded, and how they can obtain freedom to excel and grow.

The Bible has something no psychologist can offer. A Father who loves us, a hope, a value, and a defender. God does not just hear; He acts on our behalf. It is not just words, and then we are left to deal with everything ourselves.

- Does the Bible have an answer or a cure to help us from being suppressed by our wounds and by other’s acting out their wounds?
- Does the Bible give us help to handle mental health issues and if so, how? How do we break the chain and domino -effect, not just for us not to fall when hit, but not allow that hit upon us to cause us to make the next person in our way fall as well?
- In what way can God help us with healing, without us becoming self-absorbed and selfish in the process?
- Can a victim really rise and become strong as a warrior of that which is good?

The words of the prophet Mica can be the words of every Christian who has been hurt and caused to fall: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me” (Mic 7:8)

The Church: A Feast for Oppressors?

- *This chapter addresses why many with mental health problems continue to struggle after becoming Christian, and sometimes even become worse.*

Why can it be hard to find healing and refuge for Christians in the churches? Some churches are good and loving and can offer those struggling help and relief, but many have a negative experience while trying to find compassion in the church. It is not a certainty that the wounded will find relief by becoming Christians or coming to Christians. In some instances, damaged people come to Christian groups only to be further harmed and exploited. There are several reasons for this.

In the book of Revelation, chapter 18, we see a statement: «Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird» (v.2)

This biblical statement is just as true about churches. In it, there are so many people with bad tendencies. Narcissistic people struggle for recognition and power. Others who commit awful sins yet seem to feel comfortable going to church every week and smiling as if they do no wrong. People preach one thing and live differently. Pretended holiness, hiding harmful actions. Or as Christ called it: «You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean» (Matt.23:27)

Many are running out of churches because of the lack of love and warmth. Gossip, bullying, competition, and discrimination are not strange occurrences either. Many abusers are protected by church boards, and victims are encouraged not to report the offense. Not to mention the many mentally unstable people who seem so attracted to Christian social gatherings. From liberalism to fanaticism and ritualism, they all have the same problem.

Why are there so many bad people in the churches?

A church can sometimes become an attractive place for people who have bad tendencies because of how they are received. It is a common saying that abusers seek people who are willing to be victims, and victims often seek new abusers. It is a repeating social behavior that many mental-health students wish to understand and explain. Why do victims attract abusers? Why does the victim not break free from the patterns when they experience harm?

To many, Christianity is about being submissive, and that we are only good Christians if we tolerate evil done towards us. There is innocence found in being a victim because the blame is directed somewhere else. For a Christian, «being «good» is important, and it is easier to “feel good» as the victim. Another reason the church can easily become a feast for oppressors is that many within the church will not stand up against a strong personality. It is not seen as humble. And so, someone who is full of themselves can easily, more easily than in any other society, climb to an influential position without risking much backlash.

Competition within the church is usually seen when two such people are trying to get the same position or place in the group. In many churches, you have all those desiring recognition and power who struggle with each other, and you have a large party of submissive Christians going under the banner of one of them or even all of them.

Finding their righteousness not in Christ, but in their submission. By not engaging in conflict, accepting ill-treatment and choosing the lesser role for themselves, they feel «good» by their own chosen suppression.

Psychology Today brought an interesting insight: «“Victim” is a compelling identity because it makes us feel moral and as if we’re acting out of necessity, not a choice. Author Jim Ferrell states, “We complain about the suffering that we have, and yet what we’re blind to is that we value the innocence we find in that suffering.”

(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/are-we-done-fighting/202202/victimhood-is-tearing-us-apart>)

Although not written about Christians, this statement is extremely true among Christians.

Victimhood is sometimes seen as true Christianity and therefore selected as a way of addressing life. After all, Christ was a victim and was killed, and as faithful Christians, we are asked to «take our cross up and follow Him» (Mat 10:38).

Some who have grown up with trauma and being a victim coming to a church and the faith, they find it easy to remain in victimhood and some therefore never regain health and freedom becoming or while being a Christian.

The meaning behind "taking up the cross" can be misunderstood, and many think God will only accept them if they are as pathetic as possible.

The misconception is that the more mistreatment and evil we bear, the better Christian we are. Or if we are long-suffering, somehow that suffering makes us good. No one would admit this, of course, but it is often how it is played out. But others being evil does not equal us being good. The misconception of «carrying our cross» creates a banquet for abusers who can find people they can victimize for their gratification and find a platform to be admired at the same time. It is all a narcissist desire gift wrapped and handed over.

Some people cannot bear living this way, and over time, the churches are slowly emptied. In the end, the abusive people remain as kings, with their subjects accepting whatever is preached and decided in the church as the "will of God». They don't believe they can or that they should rebel. Their salvation is assumed to be in their compliance. Speaking up is rebellious; rebellion is of Satan, and their perception of their virtue lost while showing rebellious strength, and so they remain silent.

This dynamic, seen across many Christian denominations, can be used to further harm people that are already wounded. Many people suffering victimhood, and Christians, don't understand they are suppressed either by themselves or by others needlessly. That God desires and can help them to their freedom. If they don't see that this is a possibility, they will not seek it or receive it when offered.

They hurt, but they don't know how to make the hurt stop. Some don't even understand how they got hurt or who is hurting them. All they feel is this constant suppression and uneasiness. They feel captive in some way, and they don't know how to free themselves. If their faith is entangled in the belief that God demands of them to be submissive, it can be very hard to understand and act differently. No Christian who loves God wants to defy him. It is therefore only one thing that can truly free a Christian from such a situation. To be persuaded from God's word that God desires their freedom.

In fact, the statement “carrying our cross” is said in a context where there is a toxic relationship preventing someone from being a true follower of Christ (Matt.10:34-39). A few verses before, in the same setting, Christ says: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt.10:34) The statement of “carrying one's cross” is therefore not an encouragement to submit to suppression, rather it is about choosing to do that which is right even if you have to stand alone.

God wants to impute His own righteousness as a gift to us, and will not save anyone through their self-harm or self-induced affliction. We are not purified by willingly living in hell on earth and allowing ourselves to be tormented by "Satan's helpers». Although this state is not a written doctrine in any church, it is how many Christians live their Christian lives, constantly suppressing themselves. Those who have grown up in problematic families usually either rebel against such constellations in the church on instinct, or comply on instinct. All dependent on how they handled their situation growing up. Those who come out of childhood as «warriors» will easily fight any suppression and unfairness they see in the church. If they were a whistleblower in a dysfunctional family relationship, they are likely to become a whistleblower in a dysfunctional congregation too. Those who came out stuck in victimhood will easily comply and accept injustice in the church. Some do both back and forth, and they might struggle the most to find peace. For many wounded people, the church can either further harm them or help them to heal. If you are a Christian with mental health issues searching for healing, a church constellation might not be able to offer that because of human weakness and ignorance, but God and the Bible can.

Christ's words: "The truth shall make you free" and «the truth shall make you free indeed" reveal that true Christianity is not about bondage or about us becoming submissive under oppressive people. (Joh.8:32 &36) Christ's saying is about delivering us from the bondage of our sin, but many are under bondage from other people's sins too. Either way, regardless of whose sin, if we submit to it, we become "servants of sin." If we go from «sin» to another overlord forcing us, we are still not free. We go from one "slave owner" to another. Some treat Christ this way, but Christ denied that a relationship with Him is slavery:

«For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2.Cor.3:17)

True Christianity is not to feel forced to accept bad treatment or to allow harm without speaking up. Rather, Christ says Satan is an oppressor, sin is an oppressor, but true freedom is with God. This is in part because God fights for men's freedom to choose their destiny and their future. Freedom is with Christ. It is not about going from one oppressor to another, but by becoming someone who is in charge and responsible. Following God, in the Bible, is a choice we make.

Once we follow Satan and sin, the choice becomes forced, and Satan will not let us go. Sin is addictive and leads us into a destructive loop. When you invite Satan's spirits in, they won't leave even when you ask them to; they possess you, force your will, and have no respect for you.

When we select God, we must continue to pick God every day because following God does not possess us. Every choice we make is made from a place of freedom of choice. God's spirit helps and guides, but when uninvited, it goes silent. It does not possess. This is why true Christianity is freedom at every single step, every single day. God gives us responsibility for ourselves and our choices. He presents Himself as a role model, a helper, and a protector. A shepherd going before His sheep calling for them, not behind and then hitting them so they move forward. He says: "my sheep hear my voice...and they follow me" (John.10:27) Jesus also said: "If any man serve me, let him follow me" (Joh.12:26) When He called His disciples He said: "follow me" and "And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him" (Matt.4:20) By going before and inviting us to follow the principles of God is clear that He inspires and leads, He does not force or drag us along. Following Him is a choice we make. Even carrying our cross He says: "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt.16:24). Christ does not place the cross on us or force us to carry it. If we wish to carry it, we "take it up" and "follow" by choice. Christ is a defender of free will, and no one can be a Christian if forced. The term Christian itself means to be a "follower of Christ" and implies free will. Not one person will be in heaven who was forced to convert on earth.

Because God sees us as free human beings, He holds us responsible for our choices and our actions. With every choice comes a consequence, or a sequence that follows it. If there are three doors in front of me, each with a different color, and I choose one and walk through it, I will end up in the room or

space the door leads to. If God made me end up in the other room, then the door I selected was leading to, then my freedom of choice is only an illusion. It would not matter what door I picked, for I had no control over what that choice would lead to. So, when God gives us freedom of choice, He must permit us to experience what that choice leads to, so we can intellectually evaluate it and make a future decision based on that evaluation. We enter the room of the door we pick; however, God offers education to what each door leads to, so we do not pick the wrong one in ignorance. God educates, he does not take over.

The Bible itself is the greatest evidence of this fact. Why is God's word a book? God could have programmed it in our heads by force, but because he respects man's freedom, he has placed his word outside in a book we ourselves have to choose to open up and read. We must put His words into our minds. We can pray for the Holy Spirit to help us receive the word correctly and understand what we read. To help us receive it in our hearts. But God won't do that unless we take the initiative to help ourselves and give Him that permission. The whole idea of the Bible—God's word on the outside of ourselves, is an illustration that knowing God is an invitation. The responsibility of opening it and accessing the information is ours.

The consequence is the product of our decision. If we do not wish to get to know God, we will not understand Him. If we don't understand Him, we might fear him. If we fear Him, we might reject Him. Accountability therefore plays an important part of our freedom. When God does not want to force our will, even for our own good, then who are we to do it to others? If we live suppressed not able to evaluate and make our own decisions, another has taken control over our mind, we know this is not God's method to save us. They are not acting on God's behalf.

When we demand others take responsibility for themselves, we follow Christ's principles. Judging sin in the church, and helping victims become free, is of God.

At one time, the people of Jerusalem were fasting, trying to get approval from God with their apparent humbleness. They taunted themselves, believing it sanctified them and pleased God in some way. Many Christians today have the same approach to God. God responded to them: **«Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?» (Isaiah 58:6)**

If our church has become a feast for oppressors and unemphatic people, then we the people are to blame for allowing them to harm God's congregation. Our false idea of humility and Christ-like character has given them permission and the platform to harm. While thinking we are good, we have become Satan's servants. We fed the monsters, and they are now our leaders.

We are not, and will ever, become good through others' evil. It is important to know the difference between fighting evil with good and compliance to evil. If we don't know the difference, we harm and we do not represent Christ.

How did we become victims?

- *In this chapter, I address disruptive development because of trauma. How to approach someone who is hurting. How victims harm themselves. Dysfunctional families and scapegoating.*

Often, sexual abuse is the most recognized childhood trauma. In this book, the mental health issues addressed are not just those of victims of sexual abuse or incest. Even so, it is worth noting the extreme number of people who have suffered different sexually motivated assaults.

Childhood trauma and mental handicaps are caused by many situations. A violent household, poverty and stress, broken families, immature parents, overprotective parents, narcissistic parents dividing children into roles, favoritism, emotional unavailable parents, abandonment by a caregiver, bullying at school or at home, siblings harming other siblings, neglect, drugs, alcohol, war, and disease. It is usually the combination of several problems piling up that breaks someone down. It can be one big event, or it can be many minor issues that together have caused great harm.

Often, we try to find the reason for the harm in a single event or events to have something specific to point to, but the overall stressful daily situation that many cannot explain properly can cause the same amount of damage. Therefore, the mental damage someone suffers is the evidence, even if there appears not to be a specific, great, visible event to point to. Often, shame causes people to mention the smaller issues, and they hide the big issues behind them. Many test the waters, so to speak, to see if someone can be trusted with more serious matters. This testing is common with people who have suffered narcissistic abuse and have systematically experienced how sensitive information is either used against them or used to change the narrative. Many are scared to open up because of past abuse. Another reason is that often when the abused expresses need or hurt, they get the worst response from their abuser, and so this has taught them to fear expressing hurt, being open, or asking for help. In such cases, it takes time and a lot of work before the full story is told. If they are dismissed early on because what they said they experienced did not seem like a big deal compared to others, then the people who are afraid to open up will never get the help they need. This is why it is so important to show care to people, not based on what you know about them but based on the need you see.

The important thing is not to compare or measure one who struggles with another. If they struggle, they struggle. Help is needed even if we do not understand why they have issues or if we do not understand our own issues. If the leaves are blowing, there is a wind, even if we can't see it. If there is smoke, we know there has been or is a fire. If we are clearly struggling, there is a reason, even if it's not understood. No child or teenager holds a degree in psychology or can understand damaging behavior to its full extent. They adjust to their surroundings and think the toxic behavior they experience daily is how things are supposed to be. It can take many years before they understand they have been harmed for life. Children and teenagers will, without understanding, act out their anger, anxiety, and frustration when something is wrong. Asking them what the problem is can sometimes be like asking them to have deep psychological insight, which they don't have. Obviously, you will not get them to open up. Asking them if they need help or if you can be of help can also fail because they do not know what help they need, so they cannot tell you because they don't understand themselves. Thus, they will not receive help because the wrong questions were asked. Then they are given up because "you tried" but the child or teen made it impossible by not "cooperating". Even many adults do not understand how you can help them or where the issue really lies.

Most abusers or abusive people do what is popularly called "gaslighting.". Their victims will feel and have the effects of abuse, but they are also brainwashed into thinking nothing is wrong with their abuser or the situation. They are coached to think that somehow they are struggling because there is "something wrong with them personally" and with their response to abuse rather than the abuse itself.

Someone who gaslights will often harm and then say to their victim, “What is wrong with you?” and “You need help!”. The waiting room at psychologist’s offices is full of people told they are the problem and “need help,” while the real problem is sitting at home eating snacks and feeling good about themselves. A victim first needs help to understand what is harming them, to be free from its harmful influence, and then assistance to heal and reconstruct their lives.

The point is that no matter how or why, we cannot imagine away our own or others' damage because it suits us. It must be addressed. If there is damage, if there is a disturbance, or if there is a mental health issue, there is a reason behind it. And we do not need to know someone’s reason to help them or to have compassion. The damage we see should be enough to induce compassion. People are not self-destructive without a reason. In the biblical story of the merciful Samaritan, we see someone who did not stop to figure out if the man lying on the side of the road was guilty of his calamity before helping or if he perhaps deserved his assault. Rather, the Samaritan saw an immediate need and acted to fulfill it. (Luke 10:25-37)

Many victims take decades to understand what went wrong, even to remember what they have suppressed, and because they were not taken seriously based on their early behavioral response to the harm, they lose years of their lives struggling with mental health problems that could have been solved early on. If someone is hanging from a cliff, they need to be pulled up from it, regardless of whether they tried to jump, tripped and fell, or were pushed. Those who are self-destructive and struggling need help, regardless of how or why they are struggling. Many who have been victims of incest are not open about it until they have had children and are adults. But the damage would have been noticeable many years before that. This is why it is important to offer help based on behavior and not just publicly known history.

In short, it is important not to ignore symptoms of harm. The symptoms are almost always self-destructive behaviors. Self-destructive behavior and self-sabotage are signs that there “is a fire somewhere,” even if they do not speak up about it. Speaking up and opening up can be one of the hardest things for a victim to do because they are confused and scared. Many are coached or threatened into silence. Some have learned that speaking up only makes things worse. As mentioned, there can be trauma behind choosing silence. No one should demand that someone tell their secrets for you to be willing to help. If you see someone struggling, being there for them and earning their trust is essential to helping them. Don’t expect someone to open up to you right away. Do what you can to make their world a better place without expecting anything in return. Be an example of goodness, so they can, from your kindness, learn to distinguish and understand what they have experienced as wrong. The victims are not the same. Other victims open up and talk over and over again about what has happened to them. This is also part of the healing process, allowing for repetition until they feel they are truly heard and seen. It can also be a symptom of constantly questioning their emotions and perceptions and, therefore, needing to talk and hear again that what happened was wrong. This is because some were manipulated to question their perception and even trained to question it by the abusive person. This confusion can last a lifetime. Whenever the memory comes up, a victim might still go back and forth between the abuser’s narrative about them and what happened and their own. So often, they need repetitive reassurance, almost like a training exercise, to stay healthy. Words like “Yes, you already said this, and now you have to move on” can be retraumatizing for a victim. Make sure you are ready to hear the same story several times. If you are the victim, be prepared to go down the same road several times; don't blame yourself for it. If the abuse was repetitive over time, the healing from it might also require repetitive exercise over time.

There is also another aspect to the retelling of trauma. The first time someone tells their story, it might not be the full story because they fear how it will be received. And so, each time they tell their story, a new detail might be shared. Some details might even be removed, especially those they have added to seek affirmation or adjusted based on how they fear their story will be received. Many who have been abused and gaslighted have learned to lie to escape being emotionally or physically violated. Their lies

might not be malice; they are self-defense. It was how they survived. Be aware of this. If they are scared, their stories might not be told accurately at first. It is not unusual for victims to lie; unfortunately and naturally so, it causes them to be rejected when they do tell the truth. Every so often, the truth is scarier than a lie. Coached to lie to save their abuser, they might later be trapped by this web of lies when they finally open up. Another reason some victims lie at first is that abuse in their home is so normalized and difficult to express and explain that they feel they will not get help unless they say something that is concrete and accepted as wrong in their greater society. Toxic homes create toxic victims. Families that scapegoat can create victims that scapegoat. This does not make it right in any way, but if the goal is to help someone destructively heal, we have to consider that sometimes the victim is toxic or does not act as we wish them to. In such cases, when the victim lies and scapegoats, they need help to address the real issue. Attacking them for their lies first can make it hard to get them to open up about what is really going on. A good way to help is to ignore the possible lies (if not criminal or directly harming others) and give them space to open up about more in-depth issues. As they now open up and receive help for the real problem, when they are heard and seen for the real issue, they will let go of the need for the lie.

If you understand why they lie, it might be easier to forgive them and continue helping.

So, allow and tolerate repetition if someone is ready to open up. Expect there to be both underplaying or exaggerations, scapegoating, and any toxic ways to get attention. No case or situation is the same. No one's story or circumstance is the same.

The more troubles some have been through, the greater the stress and the greater the harm and aftereffects. What most childhood trauma has in common is an unsafe environment for the child, and this results in the child having to deal with these issues and surviving them rather than having a healthy, normal development. During childhood, the brain is in constant development. Long-term stress disrupts this development as the stress hormone cortisol is elevated, and if elevated over time, it can physically harm the brain's growth and hormonal balance. This creates a mental handicap and delay; sometimes it is irreversible, yet it does not show on the child's outer body. The child appears damaged, but it is not visibly damaged. And so, the child is often blamed rather than helped, which causes more stress and more damage to them.

Modern society demands that everyone be given the same education; they must take the same tests and receive the same physical training. They are all treated equally, and society demands the same of all, and the students' accomplishments are measured by comparing them to each other and to a standard created.

This seems fair outwardly. While some who have a medical diagnosis might get extra help, those who are struggling with a toxic family situation do not. Initially, the harm from abuse is not seen or recognized, and so victims do not get any help or favor. The majority of the time, a child will protect their abusers and keep quiet, and so they will rarely get help in time to develop healthy.

An emotionally damaged child will often be given additional stress, as they don't have the same ability to deal with the standards that were created for healthy children's development.

What is fun and challenging for one child becomes stressful for another. All this pressure on the brain from home and society forces an automatic bodily reaction that is not activated in other children. This bodily reaction is both a defense mechanism and a coping mechanism. These coping mechanisms lower the high level of stress in the child by elevating hormones that reduce the stress.

The body's natural coping hormones to relieve stress are oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin, and adrenaline.

The stressed child's body will start to crave these hormones, and many will seek to do and act in a way that gives them these hormones in an addictive way. If this is not obtained, the brain's coping mechanism might result in dissociative states instead.

We take it for granted that when we fall and hurt our knee, the body heals the wound, and before we know it, we will be fine again. If we keep falling and hurting the same knee over and over, a weakness is created, and permanent scars are more easily obtained. We can only take so much before the body gives in. Just like the body works to heal our physical wounds, the body also has an inner defense mechanism to regulate and respond to emotional threats. However, our bodies were not created to handle chronic stress, and threats and thus weaknesses arise from it.

Let us look at one example of how the body is confused by trauma.

The "fight and flight" response helps us escape or handle an immediate threat, and it does not damage us. The body is designed smartly. When in a threatening situation, the cortisol released pauses regular bodily functions and slows our metabolism, so a person will have extra strength to handle the situation. It is brilliant. When the body is constantly stuck in stress mode, it starts fighting itself at our expense. It chooses the biggest threat and fights it. One of the body's biggest threats is stress, which causes various types of damage to our body.

This is why it is so common for children who suffer long-term emotional and physical threats to develop obesity problems either as teens or adults. Stress makes them crave dopamine, and food is an easily accessible way to get dopamine. This means they don't just eat for nutrition; they eat for hormones to reduce their stress. At the same time, the stress hormones sabotage the metabolism and produce glucose, which again increases blood sugar levels. Thus, the body refuses to burn the stored fat and demands new food for energy instead. The dopamine is obtained, and the immediate stress is reduced, but the fat is stored and layered.

A child who is constantly stressed might then struggle with being overweight in their teens or adulthood as a result. To diet, they must force the body to burn the stored fat with a reduced-sugar diet—the very same foods that give dopamine. While trying this, the dopamine level reduces, the stress is elevated, and the body is demanding you do something to decrease it again. If the habit has been to eat the stress down, the body will crave food as the solution. Thus, the remedy is the problem, and the problem is the remedy. Most people have no idea what is going on with their bodies inside and do what the body urges them to do, and they get stuck in a damaging spiral with the diseases that follow. One of which, in this example, is diabetes and heart problems.

Let us explore this example further. Some will suggest training as a way to get hormones to relieve stress. However, for some, training will cause an elevation of stress hormones, and it makes them feel sicker without being able to explain why. They go to the doctor, and the doctor tells them they are fine, but they do not feel fine. Endurance training, where you exercise for multiple hours consecutively, can raise someone's cortisol for several days. If it is already high and the body desperately tries to get you to lower it, it will shut down. The right training is therefore essential.

The lack of understanding of how trauma affects people can lead some to give advice that can even harm or worsen someone's situation. The same advice cannot always be given to the same people. Neither are people equally fit to do the same things.

Stress has a powerful impact on our bodies. It can even increase oxygen levels in the blood and in the body. This is why many feel short of breath when they are stressed or anxious. When someone grieves hard, they can experience coughing because of it. Even someone guilty of lying in an interrogation room will feel dryness in their mouth and cough because of the stress.

Let us say a child has just experienced a form of abuse in the home and goes to school and gym class. They might perform poorly. Many children who are stressed are bad at gym class for these reasons. Another example is an adult living under great stress who tries to exercise but gives up because they struggle with what appears to be a bad condition. It is easy to assume the girl coming to Zumba class breathing heavily has "let herself go". Some people who are living under chronic stress are exhausted from the moment they get out of bed. It is so easy to blame the person who struggles and give them

"good advice" fit for normal life situations, but few understand the story that lies behind how people appear. This is just one issue a trauma survivor can have, and the problems and prejudice they face from people giving seemingly constructive advice. Binge-eating food is not everyone's coping mechanism, but other coping mechanisms can have their own related problems. Like anorexia, finding satisfaction in denying yourself food instead. Some male teens seek dopamine and adrenaline from hard metal music, porn, and violent games. It is bad for them, but if they do not get help for what is causing the stress that makes them seek these stress-relievers, they cannot be helped to make better choices. Yelling at their stress relievers causes more guilt, shame, and stress, which pushes them further "down the rabbit hole". What you try to steer them away from will cause them to do it even more. That is why, when helping someone who is self-destructive, it requires us to have the ability to not just judge and scratch the surface but to look behind it to find the real cause that is destroying this person Christ died for.

Christ seems to dislike judging others without knowledge or understanding: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged" (Matt.7:1) Many have thought these words to mean we cannot judge when someone sins against another or against us. Rather, it might actually be judging others for handling things differently than us.

We have a great desire to believe everything we are successful at makes us better than others, and so we blame those who do not achieve what we do. Unfortunately, those who struggle with mental health also struggle with physical health, and they are taught to blame themselves. In a way, we are all responsible for our health, but the right education and assistance are needed for someone to understand how they are handling their situation destructively.

Another known stress reaction is problems with memory, concentration, and focus. A child who comes to school to take a test but just sees his mother once again drunk lying on the floor in the kitchen, leaving the child to help his siblings go to school, can be just as intelligent as the next kid. But once he starts to take the test, the stress interrupts his memory and concentration, and he does not do well. Over time, naturally, this kid will struggle with his grades, which lowers his chances of going to a good school. Again, this is an example of how long-term stress reduces someone's opportunity to do as well as others. Many who have suffered trauma have to fight harder than the next person to achieve the same results, even with a reduced mental and physical physique. Some make it; others give up.

We see trauma responses manifested in all parts of our daily lives all the time. A man becomes very emotional because someone cut the line at the grocery store. Others might get annoyed, but this one man has a tantrum. People get scared, and others mock his lack of self-control. Today, these people are filmed and mocked online by millions. Some of them committed suicide, as it was the last straw for them.

Many adults have reduced emotional capacity and have an emotional response like a child.

A myriad of different mental disorders follow trauma. Anxiety, paranoia, and depression. Our bodies were not created for a world of sin. Just like a fall off a building may leave you paralyzed for the rest of your life, trauma does irreversible damage too. The brain is affected by different psychological traumas, stress, and abuse. Research has shown that children suffering long-term trauma experience disturbances in their brain's development that lead to emotional problems. It can affect cognitive abilities such as learning and processing new information. Problems with memory, emotional regulation, and behavioral control. This is not something you can tell a child or an adult to "snap out of". Those who easily "snap out of it" get narcissistic and psychopathic traits instead. Our bodies are not fooled; they will strike back at any unnatural way of dealing with sin.

The damage to the brain of someone who has suffered long-term trauma as a child can even be seen on

brain scans, but people who walk past these same people on the street cannot see it. Everything we do—our emotions, memory, and perception, is dependent on our brain functioning well. Some people who have suffered brain damage are more likely to have an emotional, childlike response to certain situations. They are not bad people, but they can be easily perceived as unstable. Most people can handle a child acting out their emotions, but they get scared when grownups act the same way. We expect more, unaware that many don't have the same inner tools to handle emotions. They have a handicap that does not show. Brain development damage is just one aspect of long-term trauma.

«Looking within those areas, the researchers saw that in volunteers who had depression and also reported childhood trauma, the anterior hippocampus (part of the hippocampus that plays a role in making decisions during conflicts) and right amygdala (linked to [fear](#) and sadness) were smaller. There also seemed to be changes in an area called the basolateral amygdala, involved in responding to danger. Fewer brain cells may mean that those areas are less effective at processing conflict, fear and sadness» . (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/open-gently/202106/childhood-trauma-shows-in-brain-scans>)

Another situation is someone who self-harms by cutting themselves. This is another way for the body to relieve excessive stress. The release of endorphins lowers stress and immediate anxiety. It gives a false sense of control. Just like overeating to relieve stress, self-harm is addictive for the same reason. You give your body an easy fix by giving it the hormones it wants to reduce stress. Those who deprive the body of food are basically doing the same as those who eat too much or very unhealthily; both create addictions to lower their inner stress.

There are healthy ways to reduce stress, but society is structured in such a way that it elevates stress in those already stressed at a time in their lives where they have no knowledge or even ability to seek a healthy way to deal with their issues. And so they reach out to whatever is closest to them and easily available as the remedy. For someone within a sports community, that could mean sports that have a healthier outcome for them. Depending on whether the stress is affecting their physical condition, many people in difficult life situations will have problems with sports. But there are those who are not affected as much physically, and they might find relief in sports activities that give them adrenaline. For others, a quick "remedy" is drugs and self-abuse.

Some become overly sexually active, another act that produces the stress-relieving hormone oxytocin. Porn can also activate this hormone.

Most addictions out of control activate stress relieving hormones but harm and suppress us, which again causes stress and the need to reduce it, trapping someone in a never-ending cycle.

Some people replace an unhealthy addiction with a healthy one, but they are still dependent on and slaves to it to cope.

Ironically, this means that someone addicted to working out might be driven by the same desire for the same hormones and mental result that someone who binges eats is. They are both acting to relieve inner stress and chasing after hormones to achieve it. Yet, the training-alcoholics see themselves as in control while the other is out of control. However, if you take the training from the one using it as stress relief, they are just as in turmoil and anxiety as the one trying to diet. The difference is that one addiction has a healthier effect, whereas the other does not.

God sees how men judge each other while being guilty of the same things, only manifested differently.

The world we live in addresses the symptoms of stress, but God wants to deal with the cause of our stress.

When constant elevation of stress and stress-related hormones is at work during long-term trauma and abuse, it damages the body in more ways than just mental. It leads to elevated blood pressure and elevated glucose levels, which can lead to type 2 diabetes. Stress disrupts the immune system and the inflammatory response system. Stress is known to cause obesity, depression, infection, multiple sclerosis, and lupus. As a child, it will affect the nervous system, brain function, and other organs, as well as reducing important neural connections during the brain's development.

"Stress affects all systems of the body, including the musculoskeletal, respiratory, cardiovascular, endocrine, gastrointestinal, nervous, and reproductive systems."

Trauma is also tied to atrophy of the spleen, lymph nodes, telomere shortening, and increased stress hormones, which impair immunity and increase inflammation. Impaired immunity and inflammation increase risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, anxiety, depression, viral infections, autoimmune diseases, allergies, and asthma» (<https://salud-america.org/4-ways-childhood-trauma-changes-childs-brain-body/>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/body>)

Often, the long-term effects of stress are seen later in life, and little importance is given to those struggling early on. Many trauma survivors come to their doctor's office with complaints of shortness of breath, pain, or digestion problems, only to be told that they are fine and don't fit into any of the standard categories. They are not seen, heard, or believed in and are instead humiliated. While the symptoms are real and not imaginary, they are also lethal in the long term. A doctor with respect for himself or herself should be concerned for anyone living with chronic stress and having strong symptoms from it, as with any other illness.

The Bible talks about sin destroying us and the world, and sin is why stress is constantly activated. Stress is destroying us; it is killing us. Sin and stress are related in the sense that sin is the action and stress is the response to the action. Sin is the choice; stress is the consequence. It does not have to be your sin that causes the stress, but all sin will cause stress somewhere and with someone. Even for those who do not admit their sin, their bodies will still have a stressful reaction to it.

Sin is not natural in God's world. The body is confused and feels threatened, but it does not understand the threat. God did not design our bodies for sin, yet we are now living in a world of sin as sinners.

Thus, the body is constantly fighting for our survival. A lot of the time, we don't understand who is at fault, why we are stressed, where the anxiety comes from, or why those responsible tell us they have done nothing wrong. The world's "experts" might even tell us that our sin is healthy, and what God calls healthy is the sin causing the stress. They call good evil, and evil good. As stated in Isaiah: «Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!» (Isa.5:20)

This is confusing because our body was initially designed to meet God's standard. The confusion makes addressing the cause of our stress sometimes almost impossible, and many must invent or imagine the threat to find some peace in addressing it. It is a form of dissociative victimhood. To give the blame to the wrong people and situations. An example could be addressing sexual abuse or mental abuse in the home. As they have been taught that it is not wrong by the ones at fault, even when it is, the powerlessness can cause them to create a "scapegoat" or "villain" to cope.

It can be compared to a recurring situation where people were so thirsty for justice when a crime was committed that the police would feel rushed to pick someone to satisfy people's wrath and "calm the storm". It has led to countless innocents being wrongly convicted. In the USA, the foundation called the "Innocent Project" overworks by trying to free all the innocent incarcerated.

It has also made way for what is today called cancel culture. When there is distress, society looks for someone to blame to create some kind of temporary relief, and one person is picked to take the blame for a greater societal issue.

The author, Luke Burgis explained it well, saying: "A scapegoat is someone or some group that is used

to achieve a very specific purpose. People make scapegoats when there is some fundamental truth that they don't want to acknowledge, so a person or a society can transfer the blame to them, expel or eliminate them, and imagine that the cause of all their problems is gone. People do it because it produces a sense of catharsis, relief, or healing. Scapegoating feels good because it is a way of protecting ourselves from having to suffer. Somebody else has to pay the price of our sins and our weaknesses. Scapegoating also forms group identity. Throughout history, when there is absolute social disorder, it is the time when there is most likely to be a scapegoat. And the scapegoat brings a moment of peace and relief" (The ugly psychology behind scapegoating | Luke Burgis, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLa0zqShCcw>)

In every dysfunctional family, the need to blame one family member happens. Even in a dysfunctional family, an order of dysfunction is created, creating an illusion of normality in the abnormality. The member of the family who addresses "the emperor has no clothes" and exposes the toxicity, usually because they are victims speaking out, disrupts the other family members' facade and coping mechanisms. Thus, the one who speaks up and does not go along with the family group dynamic automatically becomes the "scapegoat," is given the blame, and is told they are the disruptive and toxic one.

As I will address in a later chapter, scapegoating is a term taken from the Bible and used in modern psychology in its setting. However, scapegoating can be used in good and bad ways. If the blame is put where the fault is, the peace created is good. In a sinful world, this is disrupted, and the scapegoat is often the innocent or the one who wants to change a toxic situation. This is because man loves sin and continues to sin; thus, the good guy is considered to have a destructive element, and an illusion is created that everything that goes wrong, or feels wrong is not because of sinful action and choices but because of the one pointing them out.

Depending on a group's or individual's motive and desire, the good guy or even the victim can be perceived as a bad and dangerous threat. This might also induce the victim to scapegoat someone innocent, as the guilty refuses to take blame. Not understanding themselves, they are looking for someone to blame for how they feel, finding something or someone that stands out.

This is how many deals with sin, they create an alternative suppressor or look or even provoke someone to suppress so that they can claim victimhood and get the sympathy they were denied from the real harm they experienced. A family that refuses to acknowledge their crimes towards their children and even portray the child as a liar might induce the child to as a teen and adult seek victimhood somewhere else where they can receive the justice and sympathy deprived from them as children. And thus, a victim can easily claim to be a victim of something else.

Many male serial killers have been found to punish other women for something another female have done to them in the past. This is also another way of dissociating the issue and diverting blame. Even a cold-blooded murderer cannot sometimes ace their transgressor out of fear and attack someone who resembles them instead. This is an extreme example, but the principle behind it happens in ordinary families as well. If trapped in a situation or dependent upon someone abusive they are scared to address, it is easy to take it out on a stranger in the local store who said something that triggered them instead.

For example, someone might suffer degrading treatment at home without retaliating, but when a stranger, in a brief moment, makes a comment that can be interpreted as degrading, the person has an overreaction and snaps and yells at that stranger. Life is full of people walking around as "undetonated bombs," and usually innocents are made to pay.

Many find satisfaction in making themselves the threat and then punishing themselves to feel "relief". They become both abusers and victims, taking control of both roles to "silence" the need for justice. Some people's stress causes apathy, the body becomes depressed and shuts down meaning and purpose so that you will be less stressed and emotional to what happens. Usually if you tell yourself the situation you are in is impossible and that there is no solution, we perhaps unintentionally cause our body to go into a depressed mode to help us cope. Our bodies do what we tell them to, even if we don't mean for it to respond in that way.

The human hurt is so complex and has so many sides and pits. But although the consequence of sin manifests in thousands of ways, it all has the same beginning.

Science has not even begun to see or understand half of how sin causes harm. Refusing to acknowledge God's definition of sin they are not able to stop the consequences of sin and the hurt. The more a society deviates from God's standard the more pain and suffering will ensue, because sin causes stress and dissociation whether they believe in God and His standard or not. God's science is real science, while those who chose to justify sin have the science of wishful thinking and society remains the same or worsens.

All the problems we face in the world today are the result of man battling their hormones, their hurt, deviating blame, their addictions and so on.

God knows how our bodies work, how we got in our mess. He understands how we chose destructive ways to combat evil with evil sometimes unknowingly and unwillingly. He has the solution and the way out of the cycle of pain and defense. We just have to listen to Him and stop thinking we know what is best for ourselves. For we are controlled by impulse and emotions when we make our decisions, God needs us to stop and listen to Him to find our freedom. Help us regulate and regain control over our stressed emotions.

God has good news; He has the remedy.

«There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death» (Pro.14:12)

When Paul was scapegoating the followers of Christ, thinking it would solve the societal problems they had at the time, Jesus met him on the road and said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ..it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4&5)

Paul thought he restored order and peace to Jewish society by eliminating the followers of Christ, but he was mistaken. It was true that Christ's followers were disruptive to the Jewish state, to families, and even to their way of thinking. Still, Jesus claimed targeting them would be hard for them long-term, as what they considered the problem was actually the solution and the known order was problematic. Paul then joined the other side and was considered a disruption and a problem for the other Jews, who now wanted to kill him. Paul's life did not become easier—far from it—but his soul was at peace. Christ let Saul know that persecuting or putting the blame wrongly would not make the problems go away, and he would eventually be hurt by diverting blame to the wrong group. The Jewish nation was a dysfunctional family that needed to be broken up before they harmed the truth and their people even more. Living in lies and diverting blame only brings temporary relief, but it rarely resolves the problem or brings the needed change.

Jesus tells everyone the same. He does not promise life will be easy, only that our wounded souls will find emotional rest in the truth and in living the truth. It does not help if anyone becomes powerful and can eliminate all their enemies if their insides are full of anxiety and despair. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt.11:28-30)

«Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David. » (Isa 55:2/3)

How do victims communicate?

- *This chapter addresses how victims struggle in social situations and with communication.*
- *How to change or adjust your approach when helping victims by better understanding their verbal and non-verbal communication*
- *It also addresses different ways victims can harm themselves and those around them because of their own confused state.*

The language of someone who grows up with trauma and meets someone who grew up in a well-functioning family can be compared to two people speaking a different language or coming from two different cultures. Two cultures might express the same emotions differently or with different traditions. While something is considered polite in one country, it might be an insult in another. The best way to combat cultural misunderstanding is to understand the meaning the other person has for what they are expressing or doing. By understanding, fear and insecurities are removed.

Some countries have the same words in their vocabulary, but the meaning is different. For instance, Norway and Denmark both have the word “rar” in their vocabulary. In Norway, it means “strange” or “odd”, but in Denmark, it means “sweet” or “cute”. So while a Danish man might mean to compliment someone with their communication, it might still be perceived as an insult. The only thing that can change how what he communicates is perceived is if the other person understands the meaning he uses when using the word. The USA and England both have the word “pissed” in their vocabulary, but in England, it means to be drunk and in the USA it means to be angry. Again, the only way to avoid misunderstanding each other is to understand what the other means by their communication of the same word. This can be compared to communication with victims. Both verbal and non-verbal language might look the same as those expressed by someone who is not a victim, yet it might still mean something entirely different coming from the victim.

The ways victims communicate can also be different from each other, depending on how they dealt with what happened. If there was someone to help guide them along the way, or if they had to deal with everything on their own. Plenty of people with troubled pasts seem to find each other because they understand each other better than they understand someone who had a well-functioning childhood. Unfortunately, it can also mean that trauma survivors’ bonds and form relationships where they might bring each other additional pain.

There is such a big specter that it is not possible to cover them all here, but to bring awareness, I will give some examples. Whether we are trauma survivors or find ourselves communicating with someone who is, the best way to approach it is to understand what is happening and why.

Victims struggle with confrontation.

Bad communication is a source of conflict for the survivor because it creates misunderstandings and triggers a fear response.

Many victims can’t handle confrontation in a healthy way. Confronting a survivor of long-term trauma, even if justified, can lead to a response that appears to the mentally healthy individual as an overreaction. This victim’s response is a survival instinct.

To simplify it, if every time you stepped out of your house you slipped on the stairs and hurt yourselves, you would start avoiding the stairs if there was another way down, or you would change how you walk down the stairs.

If someone sees you, at first glance your slow walk down might appear overly cautious or unnecessary. But our body is learning and reacting accordingly. Had they known that you kept falling down those stairs, they would have understood your behavior. Without understanding, the act seems foolish or an overreaction, but with understanding, it seems sensible. This is just an illustration, but how we view someone is very dependent on understanding and information. If we do not have access to either, empathy should be chosen before a judgment that is degrading to the other person. It is the same when we meet a trauma survivor. They can act differently; their body language might be different, even their wording, but a hasty judgment serves no one.

For someone growing up in a difficult home or school situation and having suffered confrontations that were too harsh or overwhelming for the child, they learn to avoid or have a fear response to confrontations.

Without treatment, a comment such as "Clean up that chocolate paper that you just threw on the ground" can trigger them in a very negative way. They can say nothing and worry about that confrontation all day. Debating you in their heads.

Or they can get angry, shout, and almost seem willing to hit you just for making that comment. Both are trauma responses. One is passive, and the other is aggressive. Therefore, know that a long-term trauma survivor usually always fears, dreads, or avoids confrontations. They have experienced that little issues would end up with large consequences, and so they are alarmed and scared at even small confrontations because their bodies remember the danger of such small confrontations. In abusive homes, even normal behavior can induce anger from the abuser. A look, a noise, or a wrong word could cause the abuser to become abusive, violate them, or mock them. A good number of childhood trauma survivors, therefore, might become defensive or fearful of all sorts of confrontations. Still, they must be confronted with unacceptable behavior, but a lot of work must be done for them to be able to handle it healthily. They do not have an exaggerated response for no reason; their body is trained that way. Confronting them for being wrong might make the situation worse.

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal.6:1)

"A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger." Pro.15:1)

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col.3:12).

Victims struggle with ambiguity.

Other trauma triggers can be ambiguity. A victim can desire to have control and know and not have to wait for a response. This often comes when a child in an abusive situation learns to be on alert and evaluate everything happening in order to best adjust to or defend themselves from the threatening situation. The need to be prepared at all times brings an impatient desire to know as much as possible as fast as possible. As an adult, if they feel they can't read a situation or must wait for a response or an outcome, it can be very triggering. It can be something as innocent as a person taking their time to answer a message or "thinking a little too long" before providing feedback on a request. A moment of awkward silence can cause anxiety. As an adult, not knowing the outcome of a given situation can cause a lot of stress and frustration, and they might not even understand why it does. It can even manifest as ADHD symptoms. They can appear impatient or having a hyper personality when, in fact, they are emotional trauma wounds. Not knowing what is happening in a situation creates emotional stress. Some long-term trauma survivors struggle with small talk because it is disguised communication where it is hard to understand the other person's intentions and feelings, and it can at worst create an

atmosphere of ambiguity.

These types of issues are not standard for everyone, but for many. Small talk creates trust in inter-social interaction, but for a long-term trauma survivor, it can create the opposite. They need more to feel safe, and so the small talk can get in the way of a conversation that reveals more about the person they are speaking to, which helps the trauma victim feel more in control over the situation. So, what one person feels brings trust creates the opposite for the other, yet both seek the same thing: to feel comfortable and safe with the other person. Needless tension is created because the two search for the same thing in opposite ways. Instead of mutual trust, mutual distrust is created. Some long-term trauma survivors need to see openness and self-reflection from those they meet, so they know what you are made of. Talking about how much you love your dog and how the dog makes you feel safe, might be better small talk than talking about something non-personal like the weather or the neighbor's Christmas decorations. Some long-term trauma victims don't like talking about personal things at all, and so there is not one shoe that fits all. There are even victims who fear all deeper conversation and prefer small talk, afraid the conversation will go into a disagreement and become confrontational. So, it is not possible to say that all have the same experience or the same reaction. Ambiguity can manifest in more than one way.

The best approach is to try to understand the signals the other sends out and respect them. If someone is uncomfortable with small talk, a more meaningful conversation could help. Unfortunately, when someone does not respond well to small talk or gets uneasy in deeper conversations, many avoid them instead of trying to find a different communication approach. This will make survivors even more isolated. It should not be hard for someone mentally healthy to quickly evaluate if small talk or deeper topics are what make the victim uneasy, and then choose what makes them the most comfortable. Don't give up on victims too easily. The most important thing is to not be fake but to be sincere. Someone who has grown up in a toxic family is trained to read faces, and if you are not real, they will know and feel uncomfortable. They do it automatically.

"a man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet" (Proverbs 29:5)

"They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak" (Psalm 12:2-3)

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," (Proverbs 25:11)

Victims struggle with feedback.

Childhood trauma survivors also struggle with other types of feedback. In a healthy society, complimenting each other is used to communicate and show friendliness. While a survivor can get triggered and fearful at compliments. Especially if they have experienced being mocked as part of the abuse. Often, it is caused by the child growing up where good and bad feedback are mixed. In a toxic, traumatic relationship, a nice word can often be followed by abusive behavior. A compliment is used to manipulate, harm, or put people up against each other. Some have experienced being targeted when they succeed at something or show cleverness. They have learned that they are not allowed to thrive or do good, and are used to hiding it when they do.

When growing up like this, a well-intended and innocent compliment or praise for a good job might trigger a trauma response like silence, alertness, or distrust.

And so, what gains trust between two healthy individuals, causes distrust and insecurity when done to a child trauma survivor. Instead of saying "thank you," they are desperately trying to figure out your intentions by saying the compliment, so they can protect themselves.

Again, this is not always the case with everyone, as people's experiences are different. If someone mostly grew up with negativity but had a kind neighbor or grandmother saying nice things to them, they might learn to appreciate it and even long for it. They have a good association with kind words. However, most childhood trauma survivors struggle with any type of feedback. Children growing up

with abuse can get terrified if someone gets mad at them as adults. Even if the people who get mad at them would not dream of harming them, they become abusive in the victim's eyes regardless. This can cause many problems because a victim can have trouble distinguishing between normal and abusive people. So, the person rightfully getting mad at them can be called out as abusive when they are not. It is the victim's emotions and triggers that now accuse the individual of being something they are not. Many victims are dreaded because of it, as many false accusations can result from it. A sexual abuse victim might misunderstand a friendly pat on the back from their boss, which can cause a false accusation. This is because a victim does not always understand that their perception is influenced by past events. In such cases, the victim causes great harm to those whose intentions are misunderstood.

When Judas betrayed Christ, Jesus said: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

It is regarded as a terrible betrayal when someone who is hurting you is at the same time apparently flattering you and showing you kindness. A grownup might handle it, but a child is confused by this type of behavior. Giving with one hand and taking with another. Patting someone on the back with one hand and stabbing them with the other. Such abusive behavior can make a child grow up to be very weary of even kind feedback. A kiss can be perceived as a threat instead of an expression of love. If you compliment someone and they look very uncomfortable and struggle to say thank you, they might not be rude, just triggered. Don't take offense. Find another way to show them you appreciate them if they can't handle your compliment. The first thing a Christian needs to be aware of and do is to not take everything personally or as a rejection.

"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" (Pro.27:6).

Victims can become passive-aggressive.

Another typical trait seen in victims of childhood trauma is that they often expect or hope people will read their thoughts or read between the lines. Fearing confrontation, they can struggle to voice their needs, and it will continue until adulthood. As an example, a child hoping to get supper but too afraid to ask for it will wait in silence or try subtle hints instead. The less confrontational the child is, the less likely it is to be harmed.

Continuing this way of communicating as an adult is not uncommon, but it leads to repeated disappointment and misunderstanding. People cannot read other people's minds.

Although a parent should know to give their child supper, a friend or a stranger as an adult is likely not to know what they should do or are even obligated to do for another adult. So, the person with the childhood trauma might get offended and even angry with you without explaining why, as that would be too confrontational for them. Many long-term trauma survivors, therefore, become passive-aggressive in their communication.

Even though a victim is responsible for changing their own toxic behavior, it can help others understand that some victims might struggle to voice their needs. Showing them a little extra attention and noticing when they show some kind of distress can help meet them halfway and take the burden off their shoulders.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal.6:2)

For a victim, it can be good to know that God sees and notices what others do not, and to put hope in Him instead.

Many victims struggle with authority figures.

Many struggle with adjusting to rules and authority, as it feels suffocating and triggers panic attacks. Usually, this happens to those who grew up with unfair authority figures they needed to rebel against on the inside to maintain a sense of control in a situation over which they had no control. This continues into adulthood, where authority is seen as a threat alone, and any person in such a position is

dreaded and even disliked.

This causes conflict when the leader of a team or group is chosen, and the trauma survivor is childishly rebelling against any attempt to create order and organization. Some survivors express a need to be the leader, so they don't have to be under someone else's rule, yet it can be obvious they are unsuited for the role. Having had bad authority figures as children, they easily feel anxious and dislike anyone in authority over them, especially if they show any similar traits. For someone in a leading position, this can become a problem, and they might not even have done anything wrong yet still be targeted by the victim.

Many long-term trauma victims who are fighters find it easier to confront and challenge an authority figure elsewhere than at home.

There are also children who grow up without an authority figure and without healthy borders, and are used to doing as they please. They, too, can struggle with authority figures, as it is strange to them to suddenly be following someone else's lead.

The third group that can struggle are those who have "raised themselves" in the sense that they have only ever felt safe in their own company. As such, ending up under someone's authority can cause anxiety.

The most important thing is to try to understand why someone struggles with something that a mentally healthy individual finds non-threatening. Everyone must be subjected to some authority during their life; trying to find a healthy way to find safety in such a situation is important.

Unnecessary authority or rules should be avoided as much as possible, using only what is necessary. If you love telling people what to do and controlling situations, know that many victims will strongly dislike you.

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ... All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" (1.Peter.5:2-5)

By Christ's ruling method, if followed, a trauma survivor will find safety. Christ does not support those who try to use needless authority to satisfy their ambitions. It only harms others.

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt.20:26-28)

If Christ's advice is followed, more victims will feel safe in the church.

The compliant victim and the different victim expressions

There are victims who are more compliant as well. Not just with authority figures, but with people they meet in life. They have been taught not to fight or to fear fighting someone's wishes, and so they comply easily and struggle to say no.

It is important to understand that a victim does not behave in just one way. Often, many have doubted victims because they do not behave like typical victims.

Several who survived kidnapping by serial killers had chosen to be partly compliant and then wait for a chance to escape.

One such example is a victim of kidnapping and rape who managed to get away, named Lisa McVey. The killer, Bobby Joe Long, had killed every single other victim but let her go. Lisa had been the victim of long-time sexual abuse before the kidnapping and behaved differently than the other victims.

She appeared more applicant; she knew how to survive a sadist. At the same time, she rebelled inside and gathered information against him, so that when she escaped, she helped the police find him and stop further killings. She managed to humanize him and herself, making it hard for him to kill her.

Most victims would just fight and lose.

There have been several kidnapping survivors who had a past of abuse that broke the role play of the kidnapper, leaving them confused.

Victims can confuse and change the game with a criminal, but they can unfortunately also confuse the police and the community. People expect victims to behave in a certain way, and when they don't, they are not believed. This often happens when a long-term victim is compared to a short-term victim. In the story of Lisa McVey, when she came to the police with her story, she was at first not believed. Because she did not show enough "emotions" and seemed, in their opinion, too overly focused on details for her story to be true. Luckily, she met another policeman who believed her, and this led to the serial killer being caught. McVeys reaction to her attack was tied to her past abuse and therefore manifested a little differently than other victims.

Another true story was made into a miniseries in the USA. Marie Adler was raped by a stranger, and when she reported it, she was not believed and even pressured to sign a statement saying that what she had said was a lie. When another police force in a different state caught the same rapist, they found evidence on his computer that Adler had been one of his victims. Adler came from foster homes and had seen her share of trouble beforehand, so she did not act like the typical victim either.

Deciding to escape further conflict and confrontation, she confessed to having lied when she had not. The two young girls here mentioned both had trauma in their pasts and were both at first not believed, but one was eagerly trying to catch her perpetrator while the other "gave up" and signed a false declaration that she had lied.

These are extreme situations, but dysfunctional families can also create two different types of victims: the compliant and the rebellious. Often, a victim can go back and forth between being compliant and rebellious and have both traits. Switching between the two can also be a survival skill.

Children that copy their traumatized parents

There are children who have the traits of victims but are not victims of abuse themselves. Rather, it is their parents who are the trauma survivors. Children mimic their parents, especially if they trust and love them. They think this is how the world of communication is, and so they continue the trauma-communication, despite not having been through the trauma themselves. This can continue for generations. Unfortunately, many can mistake the children of trauma survivors for victims because of their expressions and then target the parent. It is critical to never make a hasty judgment.

Our imagination is not reality. Our guesses are not the truth. The only way to know is to communicate with the people we wonder about.

Some children of Holocaust survivors were indirectly impacted by what their parents had gone through; others were not. Science even shows us that trauma response is genetic.

"A person's experience as a child or teenager can have a profound impact on their future children's lives, new work is showing. Rachel Yehuda, a researcher in the growing field of epigenetics and the intergenerational effects of trauma, and her colleagues have long studied mass trauma survivors and their offspring. Their latest results reveal that descendants of people who survived the Holocaust have different stress hormone profiles than their peers, perhaps predisposing them to anxiety disorders" (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/descendants-of-holocaust-survivors-have-altered-stress-hormones/>)

Ultimately, this means that someone can be a good parent, but their child might struggle anyway. It also shows how trauma continues to have an impact in many ways other than through social constructs.

Social Anxiety

Some survivors become antisocial, giving up trying to communicate because they keep getting misunderstood and disliked. Many also suffer from social anxiety. Afraid of saying and doing the wrong thing in a social gathering, being used to struggling, or feeling unsafe at social interactions. Many children from dysfunctional homes with abuse have experienced unrealistic demands and unreasonable punishment for not meeting them. As a teen and adult, this can manifest in the worry of not measuring up to people's expectations. Many, therefore, avoid situations where there can be expectations directed at them. They fear being disappointed. They feel like a fraud even when meeting expectations. Some will even avoid phone calls because there is more pressure on the conversation to flow well, and silences can feel awkward.

Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up. – Proverbs 12:25, NIV

Victims with identity dysphoria

What modern psychology calls gender dysphoria can have several reasons if we look at it from a spiritual, Christian perspective.

A child normally grows up and identifies with the parent of the same gender. Boys look up to their father differently than girls, as they naturally try to learn manhood from him. It is the same with the girls who copy their mothers. Before, gender roles were clearer than they are now, which makes it easier for children to be confused about what role they are supposed to have. If men and women fill the same roles in society, a child will determine who they admire the most and identify with that. This could be in part why there is so much gender dysphoria in the west, where gender roles are more erased than in other places.

When a home is dysfunctional and the role model is bad or cruel, the child can start feeling strong dissociative feelings towards their gender. They would rather not look, resemble, or be like them in any way. They sympathize with the opposite gender. Despising the gender role model can lead to a feeling of dislike for anything similar in their body. A cruel narcissist mother can make the daughter feel a dissociation that leads her to wish to be a boy instead. It does not have to be a big trauma. It can be small manipulations that a child feels strongly pressured by and creates a disgust to resemble the parent. If both parents are bad, the child can still choose the bad parent who society tells them to be like as the gender they rebel against.

Even neglect or emotionless connection is abuse that can make a child want to dissociate from their gender. It is a way of rejecting the parent model.

So, what modern psychology calls "body dysphoria," saying it is not being happy in one's own body from a spiritual perspective, is a "role model dysphoria". They don't respect their parents, and they do not wish to follow in their footsteps.

Many men become transgender after having a child or children. It is very normal for teenagers to look for their identity, but the moment they have children and live within a family system, many start copying their parents in how they communicate with their children, whether they want to or not. An abused son who himself becomes a father might unconsciously despise the role of being a father as it is so closely tied to his own abusive father, and so they dissociate and want to be as far away from the image of their father as possible. They start rejecting their "role" and would rather be "a mother". For some, this means rejecting their gender and even adjusting their physical appearance with surgery. Feeling and thinking, their child is safe and will be happier when the bad role-model is gone. Because they don't understand why they feel disgust toward their own gender, they think it is something unexplainable or something they are born with and make it their identity. Many young adults don't even remember why or when the disgust for their gender role models was created, as they could have been very young.

There is not just one reason behind it, this is just one of many.

Plenty of transgender people have been sexually abused and dissociate from the gender they think the abuser found desirable. For an abused girl, becoming a boy will make her feel more secure against further abuse by the same man or other men. They change the dynamic and, by doing so, protect themselves, all on a subconscious level. They follow “the flesh,” or their impulses and feelings, without understanding where these feelings truly originate from.

They are aggressive about being seen as their other selves because their whole trauma-mastering process needs acceptance and approval from others to make them feel safe.

The law in the Bible forbids men to dress as women and women to dress like men; in other words, transgenderism is illegal in the Bible. This seems cruel to many who want their religion to embrace transgenderism. It is seen as a form of hate. However, God does not approve of any method to deal with trauma that causes more sin and stress for the individual and their surroundings. He wants the sin to be dealt with correctly, not in a dissociative way. Any victim who starts a path of self-indulgence will hurt others as well. Although God understands cause and effect, the Bible is clear that God wants to change how sin and abuse are dealt with. If you solve one problem by creating another, you still have problems. The biblical God wants to solve the problem with a healthy solution.

God tells us that anyone who sees their father sinning and does not follow in his footsteps is especially blessed by God. (Ezek.18) God recognizes the difficulties someone faces when their parents are bad role models, but he also says it is possible to turn the page and do better.

Many who have been abused sexually try to make themselves unattractive. Some are not hygienic, dress in big clothes, and do what they can to be unattractive. We see that their personalities and lives are still controlled by their trauma. Many dread relationships. While other victims dress to attract sexual partners and find empowerment when they are the ones in control. Victims deal with their pain differently.

In this example, both ways are wrong because both are self-destructive ways of dealing with trauma. God wants to free us and does not want our whole lives to be bound in chains by something bad that happened to us. Or for our decisions or life choices to be trauma responses.

The bad victims: the role players

Although some of these trauma communications are very self-sabotaging and sometimes difficult for people to deal with, there are other responses that are more sinister than even these.

Some victims become abusers and behave as their role models. They feel empowered by switching roles, looking for someone to take their role as the victim so they can play out the role of their abuser. This is more common among men who, by instinct, wish to assume a role of authority. To cope in the most toxic way with trauma, they become the person in authority who hurts them, and by it, they feel empowered for periods of time. They relive their trauma as the strong one, despising the victim self that felt powerless. So many abusive men are well-functioning in society and have a good career and financial situation. They manage not to lose their control by refusing to feel powerless again, as they once did.

Because they are not dealing with their issues the right way, even though they seem to manage outwardly, they become predators. Usually, such people have never dealt with their trauma, spoken of it, or held people responsible. It is a world of survival of the fittest, and they are playing the game by taking on the role of the fittest and crushing the weakest.

Women, too, can take part in this in various ways. Becoming cold and unsympathetic. They would rather not be seen as weak and aim to always have the upper hand over everyone they meet. It is a form

of self-hate. They hated being victims; they despised the weakness they once felt. It is a way of blaming themselves for anything bad that happened because they were weaker than the other. This is yet another way of trying to find control over something they cannot control. If it happened because they were weak and they now see themselves as strong, then they feel protected by the likelihood that they won't get hurt again. They feed off the contempt they feel for their weak selves. Distancing themselves from that part of themselves, they can become heartless toward anyone who is a victim or appears weak. Disliking them empowers them, just as disliking their weaknesses feels empowering.

There are children growing up in abusive families who are seemingly well-adjusted, but it is not as it seems. Many of them copy or mirror others to succeed. They understand they don't speak the language and are different, yet they find a way to accomplish it by mimicking others and doing what they do, laughing at what they laugh at, liking what they like, and hating what they hate. They are like actors training for a part in a play.

They, too, can cause great harm because, usually, they first mimic the person they want to be like, and then, to have their position, they have to eliminate or alienate them to take over, as you can't have two of the same people with the same roles in a small group. So, when this person is done copying their study, they must change the other or make others perceive that person differently and give them a different role so they can have theirs. Many will feel offended by these types of people as they try to make you out as somebody you are not.

It is a very toxic victim response. They are not themselves, and depending on whom they admire, they try to become that person by staying close to that person and then pushing them away by forcing upon them another role. Such a person might seem like your best friend and soul mate at first, until they decide you have become alike and you must go. As part of their behavior, they might want to steal your husband, boyfriend, or girlfriend, as having what you have is part of taking on the role of being you. They would rather not stay imitating you; you are just a step until they find a new person in an even better position or situation, and then they are the next victim.

It is a good example of how hurt and confused people cause great pain to others.

It is a way of desiring to not only have your neighbor's possessions, but to be your neighbor and all that comes with it because you cannot deal with being yourself.

For many who grew up in dysfunctional homes without good role models, finding an identity becomes essential. They would rather not be anything like their parents, and so someone must take their place as role models. Dissociating from being a victim and those who hurt them, they try to become someone else as far away from themselves or those who hurt them as possible. It is not possible to escape who you are or where you come from, and so, to succeed in this trauma response, a role play begins. When you do a role play, you need a costume and a script. Through the decades, we have seen how troubled youth often become part of groups that are recognized by certain clothing and styles. For instance, heavy metal fans often dress similarly and have similar hair and clothing. Same in every other group, including religious groups. Looking, talking, and acting like a new group is a way to find identity and affiliation. It is like finding a new family because your own has let you down.

Seeking acceptance as the «new you» and getting approval that the role you are playing is the real you becomes important. So, these types of survivors will seek acceptance. If you don't affirm their role play, you will be seen as a threat. You will shake their entire coping mechanism, and they will treat you like an enemy they need to protect themselves from. Because their identity is tied to a group mentality, whether understood or not, they feel brave in defending their group, like they would defend their family if it had been functional.

Because this is a form of coping mechanism, education on how to cope with the past healthily is needed to help them. If you remove someone's coping mechanism without offering an alternative way for them to heal, it might just cause further damage.

In abusive homes, gaslighting is common, where the abuser claims to "know you better than you know yourself" and then proceeds to destroy that person to control you. For those growing up, taking control and becoming someone their abuser cannot predict or claim to understand helps them feel like they are reclaiming themselves again. Still, they have gone from one false identity forced upon them to another self-invented. Again, another trauma response. A healthy individual who is loved and respected does not feel the need to be someone they are not, and they are less likely to join such groups.

Toxic victims must be dealt with even though they are acting out a trauma response.

If someone is abusing others as a coping mechanism, they need to be stopped immediately, and their needs have to be sacrificed to save the new victim. It is not relevant how traumatic their childhood was; if they act out their hurt by damaging others, they must be stopped.

In a court of law, no one is pardoned for an act done as an adult because something happened to them as a child. We are responsible, and how we deal with and cope with our trauma says something about us.

We can choose to be evil. A victim of childhood trauma is not, by its nature, a good person who can be acquitted for whatever they end up doing later. Although they are more likely to have disruptive behavior and harm because of their trauma, they have to take responsibility for their actions as much as anyone else. No one who has been afflicted with pain is given an excuse to afflict someone else with pain. The train of destruction must end somewhere.

The one who identifies as their trauma.

The last toxic way to deal with trauma I want to mention is for those who get so attached to what happened to them and who they are coming out of it that the trauma response or coping mechanism becomes their identity. They do not seek a change or remedy. They think that without their coping mechanisms, they are nothing. Here, it is important for the individual to find themselves and who they are outside of what happened to them.

Childhood trauma and anger issues

Research presented to the European Congress of Psychiatry in Paris showed how those who had a traumatic childhood and later developed depression and anxiety became angry adults.

"Our most important finding is that childhood trauma in general was associated with all aspects of anger, both feelings and expressions, including a dose-response relationship. This means that the more traumatic the childhood, the angrier the adult," says lead author Nienke de Bles, a PhD student at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands.

It has been well known for a long time that children who are often in situations where their power is taken away, or they cannot voice their feelings when harmed, will later struggle with anger issues. Studies also indicate that those with anxiety and depression struggle more often than others with anger. All types of childhood trauma except sexual abuse led to more frequent anger attacks as adults.

The study further concluded:

"We found that anxious or depressed people with a history of emotional neglect, or physical or psychological abuse, were between 1.3 and 2 times more likely to have anger problems. We also found that the more traumatic the childhood experience, the greater the tendency towards adult anger,"

"children who suffered emotional neglect had an increased tendency to grow into adults who were irritable or easily angered, whereas those who had been physically abused had a greater tendency towards anger attacks or antisocial personality traits."

The grumpy neighbor down the street might be a childhood trauma victim. Adults that struggle with anger issues push others away and even cause fear. The rejection they once felt is repeated because of how they behave, and they are stuck in this emotional circle.

They could not confront adults when they were children, but they can take “the power back” as adults when meeting others. The problem is, of course, that others will pay the price of what their parents or others in a powerful situation did to them when they were children. Losing the temper over what seem like trifles and causing new acquaintances and family to go on eggshells around the victim.

Having overreactions. It is like the last drop of water that makes the cup run over. Often, expressing anger seems misplaced, and it is. An innocent in their way often takes the “yelling” the victim never gave their perpetrator. The teenager took the punch on someone their offensive abuser was supposed to have.

(<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/983655>; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18763692/>; https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/childhood-trauma-may-lead-to-anger-in-adulthood/?utm_medium=pushly&utm_source=pushnotification&utm_campaign=2850177)

This is what childhood trauma victims do, regardless of the issues. They unintentionally take it out on others as adults. Being angry is not good for them, and being short-tempered will also make them fearful, rejected, or disliked. Sin is always circular in its manifestation. The child who was rejected will act in a way that ensures they will continue to be rejected later. In that way, they are constantly trapped. To be more extreme, some of the worst abusers are childhood trauma survivors themselves.

There is good anger, but most anger is misplaced, exaggerated, and dissociated.

Understanding the Victim

There are so many ways victims play out their trauma in communication, choices, and life. There are bad victims, but many victims are good people; they are just hurt and don't know how to not be. For a Christian, it is important to first understand that people are damaged and hurting. Being kind and understanding when someone gets scared, is shy, antisocial, impatient, or responds differently than you expect is the best approach to begin with. Most trauma survivors just want to feel safe in your company. Expecting a trauma survivor who comes into church to be instantly cured of all trauma responses is unreasonable. Patience and education are needed. Although many who appear unstable are feared, many are as innocent as you are. Their instincts are different, their understanding is different, and even their emotional language is different. Thinking you have the right one, and they have the wrong one, just makes you look down upon them in self-righteousness.

Had you experienced what they have been through, you would have learned the same emotional language as them. They learned to survive, and now that the situation is over, they need to learn how to live. You might have learned how to live, but a traumatic experience might be in your future, and they can then teach you how to survive. Although their trauma response seems improper in a normal setting, it was a natural bodily reaction, intelligence, and social skill that once helped them survive or cope. Many, without their coping mechanisms, would have ended their lives or lost their lives. Coming out harmed but still alive is better than death.

Viewing a trauma survivor as less intelligent is not right. They have intelligence like you; they have only learned different skills and a different language.

As a rough comparison, it is as if someone who grew up in the desert on a camel farm moved to a snowy northern industrial city. Obviously, a lot of what they know is no longer useful, but still, having lived it gives them character traits and strengths that can be translated into a positive force in their new life. In this example, hard work, patience, and endurance are useful in both places. In the same way, a trauma survivor should not be treated as a charity case. Rather, find their strengths and beauty and start focusing on common values and grounds. Learn as much as you teach. Be their equal. Do as you would someone who speaks another language: practice what is common in both your languages, and work

your way to understanding each other from there. If you stop communicating, you will never know them.

Although there are many toxic survivors, God sees who is good among them, just like He differentiates between a good and a bad person coming from a healthy household. There are many people with bad traits who do great harm because they have chosen to indulge in bad habits and end up harming others, although they have never been harmed by others themselves. As the popular saying goes, it's not what happens to us that defines us, but how we deal with it. If given good principles and the best opportunity, someone chooses to seek harmful influence because they do not wish to control their obscene desires, a good upbringing might not save them.

Although the majority of victims contribute greatly to a toxic society, many victims are not toxic; they are just misunderstood. It is a language barrier, and the survivor is often despised or rejected for not speaking the socially accepted language fluently.

God, who searches hearts, knows that if the roles were reversed and the one who looks down on the other had lived their lives, they might have never come out of it as graciously as the one they reject has. God judges with a far greater window of understanding than any of us.

Occasionally, God chooses the victims for important work because He knows they have been tested and proven to be true to their values and are therefore better qualified and trustworthy to help Him with an important task. Someone else whose life has seemingly been without great challenges might think they would stand in the storm, yet God knows the storm would change them or break them.

Paul wrote: «Brothers, consider the time of your calling: Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were powerful; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast in His presence.” (1.Cor.1:26-29)

Being a victim does not disqualify you from closeness with God, but where you go from that point in your life can. God never gives a requirement or demand without offering assistance and education on how to meet it.

When God tells us we can be sane, responsible people despite our experience or even sin, He also offers education and assistance on how to become it.

He does not want anyone to be stuck in a trauma response, He wants you to be free.

He wants to see His own reflection in you, not the reflection of your trauma. It is possible if we follow God's manual and solution.

Role playing with God.

Many long-term trauma survivors who are or have become Christians start role-playing with God. In this way, we misrepresent who God is to ourselves and others.

Being a victim gives a sense of innocence, and so facing a judging God pushes many to take a victim role where God has the abusive role. It might seem strange to many, but for a trauma survivor, it can be just instinct.

Rather than being saved by grace, they are trying to save themselves by being the "good victim" and God the abuser. This is how they survived in the home, satisfying a husband, a parent, and other children by subduing themselves to a pathetic state and desiring mercy. They continue this role play with God, making Him an abusive God. This leads to a hurtful relationship with God where they do not feel free or happy. And they are constantly investigating how to please Him by different means. Parents usually urge their children to do the same, so they too can be saved. Often, in closed sects, there are many victims who have been attracted to and joined the cult because of the toxic relationship with God offered there. They seek it out.

There are many in the world who have a severely imaginary toxic relationship with God. When such people pray to God in a way where He must play the part they have given Him, God cannot and will not answer because it would confirm their delusion. Many Christian individuals fail at their relationship with God because of their trauma response. He needs them to address Him as He is, so He can bless them. If they address Him as their abuser, God must withdraw because it goes against God's very principles to be abusive. A Christian trauma survivor must understand that if God is to answer and help them, they should agree to get to know God for who He is and not make Him an actor in their trauma play. There are two big ways long-term victims choose and often bring into their faith: blind compliance or rebellion.

Those who do not make God their "abuser" but who struggle with authority figures because of their childhood can struggle with their faith and trust in God differently. Their relationship is halted and difficult because they are constantly expecting or fearing the worst from God, like they once did from their parents. It can be hard to believe in a loving God if someone does not have a loving parent.

To be free of trauma-response and victimhood, having a good relationship with God is critical. Seeing Him as He is are necessary. Understanding who God is, what He wants, and what He expects correctly shows the importance of spiritual education to escape continuing victimhood in a Christian cloak. It is too easy for long-term trauma survivors to enter a toxic relationship with what they think is God and, by doing so, continue being trapped by what trapped them in the past. Just like a past abused person often marries an abuser, a past abused person entraps themselves in a religious understanding that suppresses them further. This is why we see so many Christians living by emotions and the flesh, not free from either sin or abusers. They use religion to replay all they know, to be the only person they know how to be; God is given a negative role in their mental health issues and unfortunately represented wrongly.

Being a victim does not make you a good person.

In no way are any of the examples of the many trauma responses and victim personality traits described an excuse for behaving this way. It is easy to have a black-and-white understanding of victimhood. A victim is portrayed as innocent, but the reality is that long-term victims cause great harm to others and society. Some harm can be prevented just by knowing how to communicate in the right way with someone who is hurt.

Most people are victims of something and have their own set of luggage when meeting the world. And it is this luggage that causes sin to continue to do its damage.

Hurt people, hurt people, and uphold the cycle of pain.

Long-term victims are innocent of the crime done to them, but they need to understand that if they remain in a state of victimhood or do not deal with what happened correctly, they will do harm to others.

Their innocence is not in their victimhood. The truth is that many of those who are suppressed would do great harm if they were not suppressed. Their apparent victimhood makes them look innocent and pure, but if the tables turned, they would be like their oppressors and do equal harm.

You cannot trust a victim to be a good person. Nor should you believe that you are a good person when you are victimized. There is no coalition between being a victim and being good. Bad things happen to good people, but bad things also happen to bad people.

No one is guaranteed a ticket to heaven based on the trauma afflicted upon them. It is not a card we can use to manipulate God.

It is therefore important to understand that victims are one of the leading causes of misery on this planet.

All because they do not deal with their past and their traumas in the way God advises them to. Instead, they follow their instincts and feelings to all the wrong solutions, which only ends up with more misery and victimization.

It is a known fact that trauma survivors and long-term victims can be hard to like.

In a world of sin, everyone has been imprinted with sin and takes it in some way or another upon others. Even those from seemingly well-functioning homes have been hurt and have passed the hurt on to others. That is the nature of sin; it affects everyone and everything in its path until the whole world, man, beast, and nature, are affected by it.

Being a victim of an offense and victimhood

- *In this chapter, we will look at the importance of distinguishing between being a victim and victimhood. One is something that happened to us; the other is a way we choose to live that damages us.*
- *How can a victim avoid getting stuck in victimhood?*

Victimhood «epidemic»

Victimhood has, in the 21st century, become almost an epidemic, and mental health professionals as well as politicians debate the situation. One side claims those with victimhood have a distorted view of the world and are, in fact, their own problem, with little sympathy for how they got where they are. They are getting tired because they see the toxicity that comes from victims. They minimize their hurt, and the victims are simply told to "get over it and move on".

The other side offers sympathy and encourages the victim to "tell their truth boldly" and not be ashamed to demand justice from the world around them. As most who have suffered injustice know, sometimes you will never get admission from those who wronged you. Sometimes there will be no justice. That is when we need to consider if both sides are wrong and seek the answer, as Christians, with God instead. Many mental health professionals and politicians who claim victimhood has become a trend have rejected the Biblical apocalypse. The Bible warns that in the end, sin becomes so severe and the many victims of sadistic acts so great that the earth «mourneth *and* fadeth away, the world languisheth *and* fadeth away» (Isa.24:4).

We cannot cancel the existence of victims and the psychological side effects of sin because there are too many wounded to count. Mental health issues are rapidly rising off the charts. It is a reality. The world is a battlefield, and many have fallen. It is easy to tell a victim "to get over it and move on," but it is not advice easily practiced eventually. For many victims, this "advice" is just them being silenced all over again as they were as children or in their suppressed relationships, and their anger will bottle up and resurface later.

Telling someone to "get over it" is therefore re-traumatizing and not very helpful.

The Cry from Sodom

Regarding Sodom, the city God destroyed with fire and brimstone, it is said: *«And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;*

I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know» (Gen 18:20-21)

The story of Sodom is especially worth noticing because Christ compared it to the end times: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luk 17:29-30)

We learn from Genesis that there was a great cry sent from Sodom. That means countless people were victims of hideous crimes, and they cried out about it, and God heard their cries. It can seem, though, that the cry came from Sodom, and those who cried were destroyed along with their abusers. Still, God chose to judge the city because of the great suffering that was created there. And if the victims were

killed side by side with their abuser, it means the victims themselves abused others and caused terror. We see this repeated with our own eyes today, a time Jesus compares with Sodom, understandably. How many of the child victims grow into adults who offend others. Even before they grow up. The child from the abusive household goes to school and bullies those weaker than them. Trauma is never an individual problem; it is always a social problem.

The political left, which claims to be the great defender of victims and easily calls out and cancels those they believe are offenders, does itself offend others. They are known to use force, use silencing methods, and show double morals in how they judge.

Many victims cannot handle being subdued, and they find others to subdue to relieve themselves of their pain and feel in control again. It is a terrible coping method. Victims can be awful people, but God recognized in the matter of Sodom that everything had gone so badly that everyone was born to be victims of crimes and then commit them themselves later. The cycle was so strong that it could not be broken, even by God. God still recognized the pain and hurt and took it very seriously. Sodom was also harming the surrounding nations. Four cities had been affected, and more communities and cities would have followed if God had not stopped it all. Thus, punishing Sodom was also to protect the surrounding nations and the development of the rest of the world. To hinder mankind from self-destructing so early on.

Whenever God brings judgment on earth because things have gone too far, we see the same things happening. We see both victims and abusers, and many are behaving in the same way. Those crying the loudest then and now are not always the most innocent ones. However, the more people let their instincts and emotions control them, the more hurt will follow. The number of victims today is on the rise. For an atheist or agnostic mental health worker who thinks the world is progressing to a higher state of being, this can be hard to admit or even see. And so, some of them want to silence the "cry from the world" by blaming the victims or accusing people of exaggerating their hurt.

Jesus said: "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand" (Matt.12:25-29).

No happy humans sabotage and destroy themselves without reason. Again, where there is smoke, there is a fire.

The Bible is clear that things will just get worse and worse until Christ's second coming, and in the end, there will be a constant cry coming up to the Lord. A cry similar to the one heard from Sodom. The louder the cry from earth, the closer Christ's return is. (Luke 17:29-30)

"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit..." (2.Tim.3:1-5)

There is no doubt that all these character traits mentioned here will cause a lot of hurt. The worst part is that Paul is here describing Christians in the end times. He says they have the "appearance of godliness". Peter said: "Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires". (2.Peter 3:3)

Jesus said another sign that the end is near was "men fainting for fear" (Luke 21:26). Anxiety disorders have become an epidemic itself in our day.

Jesus said: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved" (Matt.24:21-22) Everyone thinks God here speaks of a war, but great tribulations also come from living in a self-destructive and sinful society. Mankind is at war with itself.

Sodom was not in the middle of a war; the tribulations Lot and his family experienced there were tribulations from moral decline, pride, and anger. The people there did not tolerate being told "no" or others having morals that judged theirs. Lot's words: "I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly" sparked great anger where they felt judged: "And they said, Stand back. And they said *again*, This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them" (Gen.19: 7 & 9) This little interaction alone says a lot about the condition in Sodom, where it is clear the innocent went on eggshells for the wicked and speaking up could get you killed by a mob out of control. The men in Sodom claimed to be victims of Lot's judgmental morality and were blind to see that they were actually the ones who judged the most and were suppressive in their communications and actions. Most of these men coming to Lot's house were victims themselves, growing up in a toxic environment and acting it out. They had learned to love the sin inflicted on them. Their actions were still evil.

If anyone is tempted to think that God does not have compassion for people who are harmed, they are very wrong. The reason God judges sin in the first place is a recognition of the harm it causes. God's war against sin is a war against what destroys mankind.

Jesus even said bullying others was murder: «Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.» (Mat 5:21-22) The word «raca» means worthless, a feeling most children growing up in an abusive home experience and that causes them such great suffering.

Jesus is showing great empathy for those who have been bullied and harmed by others. He recognizes how it destroys lives. Even if someone is not physically killed, their spirit is killed, and their moral and physical strength are crippled so that they cannot live a normal, healthy life. Jesus indicated that this was just another way of murdering someone.

God hates sin because it damages people and leaves them ruined. He has a great understanding of the effects that even one harmful act towards another can have on that person's life. Even a word. Just because God wants us to be free of victimhood does not mean he, like many others, doesn't recognize and has empathy when seeing our hurt. One thing does not take away the other.

In Revelation, when all sin is dealt with, God says: «And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away» (Rev 21:4)

He is not saying we won't get hurt here in this world. He is not telling us to "pull ourselves together and stop crying" now. He says He wants to comfort us and wipe the tears away by giving us a better life. This is the healthiest way to help any victim, recognizing their hurt, comforting them, and changing the environment that caused the hurt.

The unhealthy way is to demand the wounded shut down their feelings, to blame them, and then tell them to continue living in the abuse. This is the great difference between God's solution and that of many professed Christians claiming to represent God.

Victimhood is damaging.

On the other side, the state of victimhood is damaging. It is important to know the difference between living victimhood and having been a victim. When God wants to free us from victimhood, it is not because He does not recognize our hurt or that we have been a victim of someone else's cruelty or selfishness.

So, what is the difference between "victimhood" and being a victim?

When we have been victimized, usually something out of our control has happened. Someone has harmed us. It is something that happened to us; it is not something we are. If we identify as the wrong deed done to us, we will continue to abuse ourselves and even others after the incident. Another popular way of living victimhood today is by choosing a different identity, ideology, religion, or even name as a response to the trauma. Assuming a different identity to combat past abuse is, for many, a way of selecting a different type of victimhood; however, it is still victimhood and manifests as such.

Occasionally, it is not one incident; it can be a series of incidents or a ruined childhood. Still, God tells us that we are not what happened to us. The world tells us we are our sins; we were born that way and have to live that way. That sin is part of our personality and therefore needs to be accepted for us to be at peace with ourselves.

God's approach is different. We are children of God with potential. He wants us to be happy and free. If we choose, unaware or aware, victimhood, then we are still trapped, and we will continue to be harmed by ourselves and others. We will become offenders.

God recognizes and takes very seriously the crimes committed against us, but He desires that we not let them control us and our future. It should not define us, who we are, or how we meet others. It should not hold us on a leash like a master.

If it does, God must constantly compete with its influence, and we will sabotage anything good He wants to do for us.

God says: «For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end» (Jer. 29:11).

No one in heaven will be a walking trauma response. No one in heaven will be a victim of our unresolved trauma. God needs us to understand cause and effect and choose His plan to free ourselves. To be who we are supposed to be outside of the trauma and what we have experienced.

Learned helplessness.

- *This chapter will talk about how we can be programmed or program ourselves to fail moving forward.*

Countless studies have looked at the phenomenon of "learned helplessness". This is seen in both animals and humans. When subjected over time to obstacles that they cannot escape or solve, they come to a state where it seems hopeless, and they accept and succumb to their situation. Countless kidnapping situations show that some kidnapped people who have a chance at escape often don't take it because they are so broken down and don't think it is possible, even when the opportunity presents itself. Similarly, children are always powerless in a grown-up world and can do little to save themselves from neglect and verbal and physical abuse. Once grown and able to defend themselves, they still don't because of "learned helplessness". This continues into their lives, and they struggle to complete even smaller tasks. They don't choose victimhood; they have been coached into this state. It does not mean there is no way of escape; it only means they need help to see it. Their self-confidence is broken, and they are controlled by fear and hopelessness.

Learned helplessness has been experimented with in many ways, especially upon students. Even those with no specific trauma are easily manipulated into this state. Some tests give impossible questions to one part of the class and solvable questions to the other. Just seeing the other finish easily while they struggled brought about this phenomenon, and they scored more poorly on the problems they got that they could solve. Other tests have been conducted where students were given really hard assignments before easy ones, compared to the easy ones before the hard ones. Overall, those who got the hard ones first had a lower score on the easy ones than those who got the easy ones first. Learned helplessness is not something that happens to less intelligent people; if manipulated, practically all people would be affected by it. These are just a few examples of healthy individuals being manipulated to lose courage or self-esteem. Now consider someone who, throughout their childhood, has been repeatedly taught that they are trapped and cannot help or solve their problems. Many will struggle throughout their lives in all aspects of life.

Although learned helplessness as a trauma response has always existed because of sin, it was psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven F Maier who created the term 'learned helplessness' after several studies and experiments. Dogs were repeatedly getting an electrical shock after hearing a tone, yet they had no way of escaping. When they were later placed in a shuttle box that contained two chambers separated by a low barrier, and they had a means to escape, they did not even try to attempt it. Their previous lesson that they could not escape or save themselves made them unable to see a solution when there was one. The dogs no longer had confidence in their perceptions. They furthered the study and created three groups with dogs. The first two were given "hope" by how the experiment was carried out.

The third group was completely helpless, and the shock came randomly and apparently out of their control. The first two groups escaped the shocks; the third group did not even try. From this, they

learned how the dogs in the third group developed a cognitive expectation that nothing they did could prevent the shocks, and so they did not even try. They were overpowered by what happened, unlike the other two groups.

(Seligman ME. [Learned helplessness](#). *Annu Rev Med*. 1972;23:407-12.
doi:10.1146/annurev.me.23.020172.002203)

It is the same with people. They cannot just "snap out of it". They need to train their brains or be helped to understand and find courage to change. Furthermore, they need to believe it is possible. Some need cognitive therapy.

Our intellect can work against us. Learning through a long term abusive or toxic situation with no way of escaping, the brain fools us into thinking we have to depend on others to get help. This help might never come, and so many get trapped with no self-esteem or self-efficacy to manage obstacles or even their lives.

A very damaging situation is when the abuser is also the caregiver and the victim is dependent on the abuser for necessity, safety, and nutrition. Their safety is also their destroyer. It could make the strongest weak. It can also create "learned helplessness".

God knows how one person's sin can entirely ruin someone's life. Because the lines of right and wrong have become so blurred, understanding the situation can take years. Often, someone in that situation will continue to suffer abuse from others. Many lose their minds. Most dissociative disorders, which are growing rapidly in society, are ways victims learn to escape with their minds what they cannot escape with their bodies. Or they have learned helplessness, and their coping is dissociating.

Humans are created to be free, and freedom is sometimes the last thing our nature will give up on. When the body can't escape, the mind will try to. A myriad of different mental disorders follow trauma. Our bodies were not created for a world of sin.

As sin increases in the world, we will have more and more young adults and adults with different types of issues and dissociation, and low self-esteem has a large part in it. All issues create more tension, more strife, and more hurt. Consider all the previously mentioned diseases caused by long-term stress as well.

Sin destroys mankind's mind, heart, and soul, which is why God hates it. He has seen the whole picture this whole time. All the causes and effects, all the repetition. He wants to remove what is damaging His creation, "reset" our genetics, and give mankind a better state free of repeating the patterns. This is part of the point of heaven and the new earth. When sin is removed, the suffering ends. It is also why God asks men to repent and "turn from their ways" to get access. Moving from earth to heaven will not solve any problems unless people are willing to give up their sins. If not, suffering has just moved to a new place. (Ezek.18; Matt.5:20; Joh.3; Isaiah 26:10)

For a long time only, physical damage has been considered because science had not discovered how much illness trauma really causes, but now we know.

Sin is destructive; it destroys life inside a human. It destroys our society, our children, and ourselves. The price of self-gratification and self-protection is very high.

There is no doubt that the world is full of victims who are hurting. And pretending it is not the case does not make the damage go away; rather, it further complicates things. You will never command a newborn to get up and walk because you know its body is not ready for it. Although it has a back, two legs, and seems to have all the body parts needed, it is not strong enough.

Demanding someone snap out of victimhood will most likely only push them further into it. Compassion and understanding, along with helping them see that leaving victimhood does not change the fact that they were a victim, would be much more helpful.

Getting trapped in victimhood for some is not by choice. Still, their recovery is dependent on breaking free from it. God wants us to have the freedom of choice, but if someone is mentally ill, they don't know how to use that freedom; they fear freedom, and they fear having to make choices. This is part of being stuck in learned helplessness.

No case is lost to God, and no case is hopeless. There is not one cure for all. Some are more damaged than others. It does not necessarily depend on what has happened to you, but on how you were able to cope and deal with it and the support system you had. A woman who is claiming victimhood to control her surroundings and get attention is in a different class than someone who has been brainwashed into submission and doesn't know any other way of communicating a need for help. No case is the same, and no case should be treated the same. Everyone's story is unique, even though some may manifest similar symptoms.

The important thing is to understand that God desires our freedom. He can and will help if we ask Him. No one who is truly a victim should desire victimhood. The only ones who gain from claiming victimhood are the abusers, or victims who become abusers, who use it to manipulate their surroundings. For a victim, the state of real victimhood leaves them vulnerable to new abuse and is not desirable.

The biblical Joseph is a good example of someone who should have been more mentally impaired. He had a good upbringing but lost his mother at a young age, was often bullied by his brothers, was eventually harmed and almost killed by them, and was then sold into slavery. He was only 17 at the time. This is a very traumatic situation that continued for years without loving family members there to help him cope with his new situation. He did not have closure or justice, and he knew his brothers probably lived peacefully and freely with their father while he was still suffering.

Being a slave and having lost his freedom, he did not give up his situation. Instead, he made the best of every situation he was in, standing up for himself even if he had to face the consequences of that. When Potiphar's wife wished to sleep with him, he could have felt forced to do what she said, yet he took charge of his own decisions and said no anyway. He did not make his situation as her slave his excuse. Even in prison, still captivated by his situation, he focused on the decisions he could make and did his best to find self-growth where he could. He did not let them take his belief, his identity, or his self-efficiency. In the end, he was fit to be the leader of Egypt and did a good job at it. He was traumatized and forced to submit as a slave, yet he came out of it. God placed a long-term trauma victim in an important position. Although he was a victim, he refused to continue to be one. He did not choose

victimhood. And when his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain during a famine, he did not just give them a new chance right there and then, as many Christians do with their abusers. Rather, he took charge of the situation to test them and see whether they had changed or not. Rather than letting them push him around again, he showed them he was in control.

Joseph's story is the opposite of learned helplessness; it is a success story from experiencing trauma to living his best life. Joseph mastered his difficulties by seeking emotional and physical support from God. As a result, he was never completely helpless in any situation; he always felt someone stronger was there with him. Instead of using dissociation to survive, he found emotional support in God. He knew God could at one point help him out of the situation, and that gave him the hope he needed not to give up. The loss of hope is usually what creates learned helplessness. Joseph could help himself by upholding this relationship with God and by constantly experiencing little and great answers to prayers. These two things helped him stay sane, and rather than staying a victim, he became a leader.

When naming his first son as a free man, the Bible says: "And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (Gen 41:51) Joseph recognized his affliction but refused to let it get the better of him. Despite saying that he forgot his toil, we know that when his brethren came, the pain was still in his memory and resurfaced, as it does with many trauma victims. Not because he wanted to harm them, but to protect himself and others, he took precautions. When he saw they had changed and regretted their actions, he chose to forgive them and give them another chance. However, in Joseph's situation, he did not forgive them and then went to tend the sheep with them in the fields of Canaan once again. Joseph was in a superior situation and remained so. He was safe.

For many, forgiveness means repeatedly placing themselves in the same harmful situation. Especially Christians do, but we can forgive others and protect ourselves at the same time. Forgiveness should not be synonymous with submission to the abusers. If the situation is the same, offenses often repeat. Forgiving does not take away the need to get out of a destructive life situation, which is a necessity for some if they are to not be abused again and have the opportunity to heal.

The story of Joseph shows the power of faith in God to help a victim remain in control in a hopeless situation. Biblically speaking, it shows how, when all other support systems fail, having God as a support system is enough. If faith is strong, hope is strong, and we will never be completely overpowered. This is the blessing a Christian has.

“And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1.Cor.10:13)

When King David went through some of his worst moments in his life on the run from King Saul, he found shelter with God. Although his situation seemed impossible to resolve, the hope of a righteous God in charge kept him strong when he was at his weakest. David even had to seek refuge with his other enemies, and he had little peace in his world at the time. Always worried about getting caught. Because of God, David did not give up.

When Elijah felt that he had no one on his side left, God came and spoke to him directly at Mount Sinai. When the three men, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were cast into the furnace for being the only ones to choose faithfulness to God among a large crowd, Christ Himself came and stood there

with them.

Those who take refuge with God have a support system, unless their relationship with God is a self-invented toxic role play. For a Christian, what is part of the solution can, if distorted, also enhance the problem. This is why many victims reject God as a helper and leave their faith, while others find healing through their relationship with God.

A christian is never helpless or hopeless.

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom.5:6)

“In my distress I called upon the Lord,

And cried to my God for help;

He heard my voice out of His temple,

And my cry for help before Him came into His ears” (Psalm 18:6)

Victim-blaming

- *In this chapter, we will look at the devastating results of victimblaming. Why do we do it? What does the Bible say about it? Why is it damaging to both the one to whom it is done and the one doing it?*

The strange phenomenon of victim-blaming has puzzled many. How can people so easily convince themselves that kicking someone who is struggling is good? Why do most people do it unintentionally? Often, when someone has been harmed, annoyance, blame, and sometimes even anger are directed at the victim by their family and community. At first, it can seem merciless, as anyone who suffers harm would want compassion and kindness, so why do they not give this to others? When harm happens to others, they blame them for it, if not to their faces, then behind their backs.

Some think the need to "blame the victim" comes from superstition and a desperate desire to believe the world is good when it is not.

It is a way of feeling in control when we don't have control. The idea is that if we do everything right, nothing bad will happen. But bad things do continue to happen to both good and bad people. The idea that someone's son got killed in a car crash has something to do with their parents' parenting, the child's recklessness, and so on. It helps us believe that our child will not suffer the same way because we are different and do things better. God left their son to die because of some "secret sin" they had. In this way, we comfort ourselves that the bad things that we see won't happen to us because we did something to prevent them.

It is very common to see victim-blaming when there has been sexual abuse inside a family. The family itself is torn apart, with some having sympathy for the abuser and others for the victim. Rather than blaming the abuser's sin, the victim is blamed to create meaning behind the hurt. And especially if the victim speaks up, he or she will often be blamed for ruining the family instead of the abuser. In any dysfunctional family situation, if one sibling has harmed another, or in cases of selfish neglect, the victim who speaks up is rejected. Blaming a victim is a heartless act that prevents justice and the recovery of those harmed. The only ones who are helped by victim-blaming are the perpetrator and evil itself. By blaming the victim, we at the same time say sin is justified in some way. This is perhaps an unintentional way of warring against God. The moment we defend a sin or make an excuse for it, we defy God and commit idolatry. Like the prophet Samuel said to King Saul when he defended his sin: *"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. (1.Sam.15:23)*

In the Bible, God never justifies sin. Giving an excuse for sin is defending its existence and its continued existence.

Jesus said, ***"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22)***

When Adam and Eve sinned, Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve and God. The implications of justifying a sin by excusing it are huge. If an abuser has an excuse for harming you, he is basically saying you are worth less than he is. And that is precisely how it feels.

By holding people accountable for their sins, God upholds their human worth. Sin always harms someone. For every sin God condemns, He also says those harmed should have been treated better and that they were worth better. That the sinner is not worth more than their victim. If we sin against ourselves, God says we are worth more than the way we treat ourselves.

"For 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." (Rom.1:18-20)

Job

In God's word, a whole book has been devoted to victim-blaming. This shows God is trying to prevent His people from victim-blaming. In the book, those who blame victims find themselves unintentionally running Satan's errand. The Book of Job is about a righteous man who becomes the victim of a series of events. His children die in a disaster, His wealth is taken from him, and even his health is taken. He basically loses everything.

The story perfectly portrays how victim-blaming happens, step by step. First, his three friends come to visit him and grieve with him. They are in shock along with him, but as time goes by, they feel the need to find a purpose in everything that has happened. They investigate the reason it happened to find a resolution to their confusion and fears. In it lies their desire to feel secure from suffering the same fate. "If Job had only done things right, he would not have had these painful experiences," they say. They start blaming the victim. "Surely," they said, "Job had done something that justified these things happening to him?" "Surely, he had some secret sin?" Or, they thought, he had been selfish in his life. Anything that could make it make sense. They tell Job that God must be upset with him and that he has to repent of his sins. Job tells them he does not even know what sin they are talking about that could make him deserve such great calamities, and so he defends himself. He does not think he is a bigger sinner than his friends, who are not afflicted, and argues for that. This makes them even more upset with him, and they now become almost angry, trying to force Job to admit guilt he does not have.

Job is further afflicted by their words. He does not understand how his friends are now justifying all this evil happening to him. Completely grieved, Job says to them:

«I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all! Shall words of wind have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, If your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, And shake my head at you; But I would strengthen you with my mouth, And the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief.» (Job 16:1-5)

The whole book is Job's dialogue with his friends, who are so persistent that Job is to blame for everything that happened to him, that Job gets even more afflicted by their "help" and no longer wishes to live. In the end, God Himself interferes and is rough with Job's friends: "And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for

yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” (Psalm 42, 7-8)

The whole book explains that bad things do happen to good people, or people that are not worse than you are, and that God desires us to have compassion.

Many people are led by others to feel guilt over the harm that has happened to them and end their lives because of it. To blame the victim is very harmful because a victim then must carry "sins" that are not theirs and that they cannot atone for or apologize for. Instead, the guilt will tear them apart from the inside. Placing guilt in the right place is important to help people recover and find peace.

Victim-blaming is an easy way for us to not have to show others compassion, but according to Job's book, in God's eyes, we need repentance like Job's friends if we practice this sort of behavior towards someone wounded.

Jesus also addresses victim blaming.

«There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish» (Luk 13:1-5)

Here Jesus does say our actions can bring a blessing because he says if they repent, they might avoid this sort of tragedy. However, at the same time, He says the idea that what happened to them was because they were worse people than those it did not happen to was wrong. Jesus is saying they are just as bad. Yet, they were not afflicted, and the others were, and so He confirms that bad things happening are not always a result of someone being a bigger sinner.

Jesus acknowledges that some have caused the harm that happens to them. In the story of the paralyzed man at the Bethsaida pool, we see Christ warning him after healing him. **«Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee» (Joh 5:14)**

With the woman accused of breaking the marriage law, Jesus likewise confirmed she was in her situation because of what she had done. "She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (Joh. 8:11)

However, in both instances, Jesus partly removes the fullness of the consequences of their actions and frees them. Here, He is showing an example that not always punishing the transgressor is the best method. Showing mercy and helping those who have put themselves in a bad situation is following Christ's example. So even when "victim-blaming" is right, showing kindness and releasing them of their misery can sometimes be better than accusing them. "They did this to themselves; let them rot" is therefore not the most Christian response.

God addresses all the standard ways people victim-blame.

The book of Job is very clever because he is the perfect symbol of the common ways we victim-blame. Job lost his family, and he had marriage problems (his wife opposed him and told him to give up his faith), yet there was not a sin he had done to deserve it. Job lost his health, a common area where people constantly blame others. Many religions see illness as a disease given by God because of something they have done. If a child is born sick, many think the mother has done something during her pregnancy that she shouldn't have. And sometimes people get sick because of poor lifestyle choices. Yes, some mothers use drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, which can cause harm to the child. But from the Bible, we learn that we cannot assume someone is to blame for what happened to them and start attacking the already wounded. Rather, we are to try to help and to show compassion.

Another group of people often victimblamed are poor people. Job also represented the poor when he lost everything he had, all his wealth, and had nothing left.

Those who are financially stable often blame those who are not. Especially in the West, they think their wealth is a result of their hard work—8 hours a day, five days a week. But a man in another country can work in his shop seven days a week, twelve hours a day, and barely have enough to cover his family's basic needs. Some work in clothing factories with slave pay, and yes, they work much harder than a woman in a fancy clothing store in London. Yet, the first doesn't even have enough to feed her children, and the second has a closet full of unnecessary clothing she never even wears. Even in a big city like New York, you can have someone work harder and earn less than someone who works less and gets paid more. This is life.

The difference between rich and poor is not always the result of who works hardest and who is lazy. It is a bigger societal problem, and every so often it is an individual problem.

If someone is afflicted with an illness, their whole family will suffer.

Not everyone can study themselves to top grades; some have too many issues to deal with or have cognitive problems. Some people who suffer from long-term stress might struggle with memory problems because of the effect stress has on their brain. If you come from a poor and loving home, you might still make it. If you come from a poor, ill-stricken, and problematic home, school might be hard.

We don't understand why someone is failing, and we cannot always choose to victimblame. Not every rich person deserves their wealth, and not every poor person deserves their poverty.

Thus, in the story of Job, we don't see a lazy man who has afflicted himself with poverty; we see circumstances out of his control reducing his position in life. We see a man who worked hard and lost his wealth because of things like "fire", "wind from the wilderness", "war", and "thieves," and yet nothing of it was self-afflicted. (Job Chapter 1)

Then his ability to work was hindered by a horrible disease, leaving him in constant pain and unable to be as active as before (chapter 2).

Then he is mentally pulled down by his friend's victim-blaming to the point of despair (from Chapter 4).

Yet in all this, we learn that Job was innocent of the tragedy that struck him. There was no “hidden sin” that caused it. There was no doom from God because he was a worse man than everyone else; rather, God said he was a righteous and good man. Very few can boast of having God say how wonderful they are, like Job could. Yet all this happened to him. (Job.1:8)

The prophet Isaiah says: ***“The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil” (Isa.57:1)***

Job, in his misery, uttered: “Why do the wicked prosper, growing old and powerful? They live to see their children grow up and settle down, and they enjoy their grandchildren. Their homes are safe from every fear, and God does not punish them” (Job 21:7, see also verses 8-17).

Psalms says: ***“For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” (Psalm 73/3)***

Jeremiah also noticed how he, God’s prophet, suffered, and those who rejected God sometimes prospered:

“Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed, I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?” (Jer.12;1)

The Bible is clear that those who prosper are not necessarily good men, and those who fail are bad.

Plenty of people suffer from natural disasters, war, and other evil men’s cruelty. Yet, they are struggling because of another’s sins and not because of their own. Yemen is a good modern example of how war has left the country in a hunger crisis. They did not end up there because they were lazy. The war destroyed their livelihood. War has created poverty and hunger in many places. The elite causing the wars have plenty of bread, while those who just want to live a normal life have to take the consequences and starve.

The God of the Bible shows an expectancy for us to help those in need rather than dwell on how and why they are in need.

In God’s Torah, He made it a law for His faithful followers to always help the poor. God gave them responsibility for those less fortunate because, whether someone’s reduced situation is because of their sins or not, we are to show mercy and help. If we don’t and insist on victimblaming, we are just making excuses to be selfish.

Jesus told about His second coming and how, symbolically speaking, he will separate men into two groups. He will ask one group why they did not help Him when they saw Him in need, and they will reply that they never saw him in need. And then Jesus says: ***«Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me» (Matt.25:45)*** Here we see those claiming to know Jesus and follow Him, even uplifting Him as king, more than willing to do something for Him. Yet, those in reduced circumstances are looked down upon, and instead of helping them, they have judged them as not worthy of compassion. Now that the situation is turned around, Christ identifies with the same people they would not help.

Christ was the ultimate example of how someone innocent must pay for other people's crimes. He was *«despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not»*. This did not happen because he was a greater sinner. He had not sinned. *«Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed» (Isa.53:3-5)*

Jesus was innocent; we were guilty, yet He was struck and hung on that cross instead of us. Bad things happened to Jesus because of Satan's sin and because of our sins. Satan would have us believe Christ deserved what came to him because that would in part justify him for doing it.

When Satan started his rebellion, many were afflicted as a result, not just himself.

Lazarus and the rich man

Jesus tells another story attacking victimblaming when he makes a parable of a poor man called Lazarus going to heaven while a rich and adored man goes to hell.

«And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.» (Luk 16:20-25)

Here we see Jesus going against the idea that the poor sick man is a sinner and the rich are deserving of the good things befalling him. In the parable, the rich show no compassion to the poor, and in the end, God will not allow the poor to show mercy to him. He is getting what he promised.

Victim-blaming is so deeply rooted in our hearts and even in Christ's days that these statements would be considered turning things around.

The blind man

The other form of victim-blaming that is not covered in Job's book is the idea that if someone is in a pathetic state, God is punishing them because of something their parents did. Jesus addresses this attitude when they meet a blind man outside of Jerusalem.

«And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him» (Joh 9:1-3)

In no way were they to think that his situation made him and his family bigger sinners than they were. When the blind man, now seeing, was brought to the council to be questioned by the religious leaders, they were provoked by his faith in Christ and responded in anger. **«They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out» (Joh.9:34)** Whether they knew of sin in the family and thought his blindness was the cause of that, or they assumed sin in the family, we don't know. Both the disciples and the Pharisees seem to know something about this man's family from how they spoke of him. What we do see here is that Jesus takes away this argument. If he was born blind because of sin, why was he now chosen by God to see? By their logic, he must now have done something good to deserve it. The Pharisees would rather not admit that, and so they instead decided that Christ's healing was not of God.

One of the arguments for judging in this manner is taken from the ten commandments, which say: **"For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments» (Exo.20:5-6)**

This is a prediction of how a society that abandons God and the principles of God's law will have more tragedy and misery than a society that listens to God. This is not so much a curse as it is prophetic. Selfishness harms the children, who are again likely to suffer. It is basic knowledge. Our own bad actions curse ourselves and our offspring. They are a symptom of our choices. Children are not forced to continue abusive behavior, but they will suffer and be harmed by their parents' decisions, whether they do as they do or not. If parents abuse or neglect their children, their mental and physical capacity can be reduced. This will lead to less innovation and more poverty. It is challenging to undo damage, and it can take generations to change direction, if at all. There is mercy when God says it will go to the third or fourth generation. It means God will try His best to intercede and give the descendants of those who hate Him the opportunity to be restored against all odds. God admits it can take several generations to do this once a family has done evil. It takes time for a family to understand the damage and not remain victimized or repeat patterns. If a parent sins against their child, the child, when grown up, is still confused and acting out their damage to their child. The third generation gets to see it more in perspective, will want a change and have the strength to make it, and is more inclined to reject both the sin of their grandparents and the victimhood and repetition of their parents. Thus, God's word about the punishment of sin continuing to the third and fourth generations is a good estimate of the cause and effect of harm. It still represents a road to recovery in the curse spoken of in the law. If healing comes to the third or fourth generation, God has been working for their healing in the process, or else the third and fourth generations would not be healed. So God is working for every generation, even among those that hate Him, to help them find Him. To teach them right from wrong and inspire them not to repeat the mistakes of their fathers and mothers and choose a better way. However, this battle is not won without tears and pain, which is why God says the curse of a sin continues through generations.

We know that every generation can choose for themselves because God reveals his thoughts in other places, like in Ezekiel, when God is accused of bringing misery upon Israel. God answers them: **«What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father,**

so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die» Then God says if a man sins, and his son do not repeat them, the curse stops right there. The father is judged and the son is not. And likewise the other way around. A father is not punished by God for his sons sins. (Ezekiel 18: 1 - 32) Everyone is held accountable for their actions, regardless of their upbringing.

It is because children and their children often repeat the mistakes of their father and mother that trauma is being paid forward, and even one person's sin will damage both a child and grandchild, sometimes even a great-grandchild. In no way was God's law therefore to be used to victim-blame, but as a warning that our actions do have long-lasting, generational consequences.

Ironically, one of the sins spoken of in Ezekiel that people commit is victim-blaming. Here God plainly states that their unwillingness to care for those in reduced circumstances is a sin (Eze 18:10-13). Those who receive God's blessing ***«hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment» (Ezek.18:7)*** And so the serious sins God is referring to that they committed were victim-blame rather than victim-help. And those who victim-helped received the blessing.

Even the early Christian church struggled to understand these things.

James writes:

«For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? ...But ye have despised the poor» (Jas 2:2-4.6)

Despite Christ's parables and corrections, the desire to admire success and look down upon those who struggle was not easily corrected in Christian hearts. So, it is still.

Popular preachers

Within the church, victim-blaming also targets preachers. If a preacher is popular and loved, and if his ministry is successful financially, it draws more and more people to him. Some prosperity preachers fill buildings with tens of thousands of people on their crusades and rallies. Everyone wants to be a part of their success because it is thought to be a blessing from God. People come hoping to get closer to God and be healed.

They think, Why else would so many follow them? Why else would they have such fine clothing and houses if God had not blessed them?

While another preacher with a half-empty small church does not even get the funding needed to keep the electricity in the church going. In such a church, people are more likely to leave.

Some ministries have lots of money; others have barely anything. This is assumed to be the result of blessings and curses.

This is not a Christian mentality, but one that stems from “the flesh”. It is seen in the world; it is also a pagan religious mentality. It is not because the most popular girl at school is prettier than others that all the boys fall in love with her. Same with a popular boy. She or he can have a terrible personality and still be admired. The feeling of “love” the boys and girls feel is really the attraction to position and success. The boy or girl who gets to be with the popular girl or boy will experience an elevation in position and how they are perceived. They don’t understand why they experience butterflies when seeing the person, thinking it is love-related when in reality it is self-indulgence.

Living on a Mediterranean island for years, I saw this strange phenomenon never fail. The tourists, not knowing the area, always went to the restaurant where most people ate. If a place were empty, they would get no customers. The restaurant owners caught on to this trend, and so they realized that to get customers, they needed to have someone seated there, so they started recruiting family and friends to pretend to be guests. The restaurant’s success was no longer tied to who had the best food, but to who could first fill some tables. When not knowing the place, the tourist would always go by the masses, in this case, the blind leading the blind. Because the other tourists did not know which was the best place either. The first would just sit down, and then others would follow. If the owners had “pretend guests,” they were likely to be the ones with a full house by evening.

In both examples here, we see the human desire to follow and trust success blindly.

Two male singers, one with an extreme fan base and the other with none, while the one with no one might even be the better singer and have the better songs. But when many follow someone, it creates this illusion of superiority and success that attracts people. Some songs by popular stars are terrible or mediocre, yet the fans are blinded by their admiration for the person’s success, and they look and sound good because of that alone. If everyone dislikes someone, you are more likely to dislike them too, even though you have never spoken to the person yourself. All this is byways of victim-blaming. Victim-blaming is the chase, desire, and admiration for success and recognition while at the same time fearing loss. Overall, it is all rooted in the desire to feel safe and protected. Following a larger group of people can create a sense of being protected.

It should not be this way among Christians. When Christians base God’s presence on these same criteria, they do not follow the Spirit but their own human instincts, desires, and fears.

The faulty logic is combated in the Bible. Jesus was poor, not rich. His family was poor, not rich. He did not live in mansions, and he was not a beloved, excepted, or high-ranking man in the synagogue. He had to preach outdoors, in a field, or from fishermen's boats. He was mocked and ridiculed. Some villages would not even receive him.

His followers were mostly not rich. In fact, one who wanted to follow Jesus was told to give up his wealth before following Him. (Matt.19:21)

For some, it can seem God wants His followers to be poor and pathetic; however, this is not the reason. The desire for money and influence can often affect a man’s ability to think and reason in the right way. Many who have great success in life are often pressured to give up good principles to achieve it. When Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," it was not because God is against rich people; He Himself made Job, Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph rich. (Mar.10:25) He is against greed, self-boasting, and what money does to many people's characters. Thinking they are a higher being and entitled to better treatment and better things does not inspire God to bless them.

A perhaps odd modern study on drivers even revealed this. They found that drivers of expensive vehicles are less likely to stop and allow pedestrians to cross the road. The study was so consistent that they found that the chances of them slowing down and allowing the pedestrians to cross dropped a whole 3% for every extra \$1000 that their vehicle is worth.

«Researchers from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas speculated that the expensive car owners “felt a sense of superiority over other road users” and were less able to empathize with lowly sidewalk-dwellers» (<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/26/world/expensive-car-drivers-study-scli-scni-intl/index.html> , <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/20/study-luxury-car-owners-stubborn-self-centered-and-argumentative.html>)

This almost silly study shows a trend that is often seen in many other parts of society. Money can, typically, make someone feel superior to others. Although poor people often blame victims as well, the harm a successful person does can be greater. Christ, therefore, perceived that being rich could be a stumbling block for His workers, whose job it is to be compassionate.

Paul Piff, a psychology researcher at the University of California, did a test where he asked a group of adults to fill out their socio-economic status. Then they engaged them in a game where they were given 10 credits, which are equal to the amount of money they get at the end of the game. Then they would meet a stranger, and the researcher wanted to see how willing they were to give some of their credit to the stranger. The study found that lower-class individuals would give up to 44% of their credits. Piff then explained that the low-class people tended to show more compassion than the high-class test group. (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129068241>)

Although these are small tests and not all tests will show the same results, they do show a trend.

I have witnessed this trend myself among my family and friends. Those with little tend to have more compassion than those who are the most successful.

In a church, I went to that was full of rich and successful people, I witnessed that the only one helping a struggling family was a poor elderly woman.

No matter how we see these types of tests, they show a point that might explain why Christ refused to let a rich young man be one of his disciples at the time. He needed the man to gain a different view of himself and others to represent Him as His disciple.

The man was unwilling, and it says he gave up on following Christ. While other men in the Bible were rich and even blessed by God, other elements of their lives humbled them and made them compassionate. When Abraham saw three strangers from afar, he hurried to show them hospitality and serve them. Being a stranger in a strange land taught Abraham humility and the importance of caring for other strangers. The trials of Jacob and Joseph helped them remain in alignment with God. David was on the run from King Saul before he became king. He had suffered hunger, unfriendliness, false accusations, and deception. The only one who came and dwelled with him in his despair and poverty were other outcasts in society: "And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and

every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men" (1Sa 22:2) The start of David's kingship was to lead the wounded.

All this helped David become humble before God. Even his sin humbled him.

God does not need someone to be poor to be compassionate, but sometimes challenges can help them get a different perspective on themselves and others.

Prosperity preachers go against the Bible's teachings on the errors of victim-blaming and make people believe the rich and successful are blessed by God and those who are in reduced circumstances or fail in life are cursed. This mentality affects their relationship with God. If their prayers are not immediately heard, they think it is because they failed to show "enough faith" when praying or some other fault.

We do ourselves a great disfavor if we look to successful preachers to give us the word of God, as they might distort it and leave us with a shipwrecked faith.

Victim-blaming to our own destruction:

Victim blaming is such a serious offense in the Bible that few of us understand its long-term effects. From what the Bible shows us, in the worst case, our idea that blessings are seen in various forms of success can lead us astray, even to the "gates of hell".

Peter held a sermon that helped bring three thousand people to the church. But equally righteous Stephen held a speech with a similar message that resulted in hatred and his death.

It is tempting to think that if a sermon is perceived negatively by a larger group, the minister must have caused it with an unloving tone or look. If they had "done it differently," they would have won more people to the gospel and their church.

Jesus himself received hate when he preached. It is true he sometimes preached to thousands, but a few days later it is said: «***From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him***» (Joh.6:66)

A preacher's success is not tied to how many people are reached but to the sincerity of those reached.

The truth stings; it can hurt. «Or wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it» (Matt.7:13-14)

Many preachers boast of their education and connections in life, but the Bible shows God placed the biggest task ever given to man upon Mary, a young and inexperienced woman. «***For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.***» (1.Cor.26-29)

Someone who is full of themselves and thinks they are better than others can rarely represent Christ rightly, and thus they are not as often chosen by God.

Christians know this principle, having read the Bible, yet they run to the popular preachers who boast of themselves. Knowing the truth and combating victim-blaming is so hard that most people lose this battle. We deceive ourselves and cause ourselves to be deceived.

Paul said: **«And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Heb.11:36-38)**

It was victim-blaming that also caused these men and women to be rejected. We fear the same calamity will befall us, and so we instinctively create distance from any preacher who might suffer for speaking the truth. Deserting the truth, claiming we should not provoke by telling the truth, we think the peace and lack of persecution towards us are because of our cleverness. That we are closer to God because we, by our actions, avoid any uncomfortable confrontation as Christians. However, we are only fooling ourselves. Truth and God's presence are not measured by popularity and prosperity. And thus, we victim-blame our way to destruction.

Jesus, aware of this self-deception, said: **«Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets» (Luk.6:26)** If no one hates you in your church, if no one has anything bad to say about you, it is not because you did something right. Are you better than Jesus Himself? He was mocked, ridiculed, and verbally and physically attacked. Even his own home congregation in Nazareth wanted to kill him.

Again, let us look at what Isaiah prophesied about Jesus: **«He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. » (Isaiah 53:3-4)** Perhaps even here we see the dramatic result of victim-blaming. Was it because he was "a man of sorrow" that he was rejected as "smitten of God"? Was that why He was rejected by those He came to save?

Christ did not choose to be poor and rejected. It was a result of man's sin toward Him. It was because He was not appreciated. God did not remove the consequences of their sins. Thus, His apparent misfortune was our sin, not His. And had the Jews in his time understood this, they might have received him.

A despised preacher without money and a small following might give us life-giving truth, while a prosperous one might harm us spiritually. Yet most are likely to give their money to the prosperous one and are themselves part of the problem of why the truth-teller is poor.

As Jesus will say to them: **"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Matt.25:43)**

Then they will argue and say, "***Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? » And Jesus will answer: «And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity".***

Some people are unfortunate in life not because of something they did wrong, but because of something they did right. And the sin of their poverty and failure is given to those who afflicted them.

Because God's servants are often in struggling situations throughout time, it can be close to impossible for a person who victim-blames to see and recognize God's chosen and seek their life-saving message and prayer.

When Jesus was carrying His cross to the crucifixion, a group of women ***«bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. ...For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?» (Luk.23:27-28.31)***

This is an important lesson a trauma survivor needs to remember and consider on their way to recovery. Their failure is not evidence of God's abandonment or anger. Rather, it can be toxic family relations and a trauma response mingling with their Christian faith. Christ was victim-blamed; His preachers are constantly victim-blamed, and He knows the pain, and He has empathy with those who are suffering this treatment in life.

Victim-blaming ourselves.

The mentality behind victim-blaming can also affect how we treat ourselves. We learn to blame ourselves, even when it hurts us and prevents us from moving forward.

Many who suffer trauma are indirectly taught by the victim-blammers that had they done something differently, the bad things that happened to them would not have happened.

So, they are greatly hurt, consumed by regret, and start slowly shifting the blame from their perpetrator onto themselves. This will not help the victim heal; instead, they will end up doing self-harm and afflicting themselves.

Victim-blaming ourselves does not give us the solution we need to find the strength to solve the problems we are facing.

It also takes the blame from the perpetrator and gives him an excuse for the sin he committed. Again, the moment we excuse a sin, even if it's done towards us, we are not being Christians; we are rebelling against God.

If we teach the ones who hurt us that they have an excuse to hurt others, it might affect how they continue to treat others.

If we think we honor God by taking the blame that belongs to others on ourselves and then punishing ourselves, we might be deceiving ourselves.

God is a righteous God. He will judge us according to what we have done. But we are not to be sin bearers to acquit the guilty under the assumption that this is “forgiving” and being “a good Christian”.

Although Christ carried our sins to the cross, He never claimed it was His fault we committed those acts. He claimed to be without sin or fault. He took our punishment, not the accountability for our actions. The lamb was without blemishes or spots. In no way did Christ accept fault for others’ sins as part of His atonement.

Neither do we follow in Christ’s footsteps by taking responsibility for someone else’s actions. If we do, we can even prevent them from giving their sins to Christ.

In abusive relationships, we harm ourselves by assuming guilt for something we cannot change. It can drive some into madness.

For instance, a child does not bear the guilt of their parent’s abuse, not even in the slightest. Giving the child blame will only cause harm. When the child as an adult starts to blame themselves, it will lead to a dysfunctional life.

Many abused people (no matter the abuse) become abusers because they have victim-blamed themselves first. By taking blame and giving their offender a reason or excuse to commit harmful acts, they are at the same time open to making excuses for committing the same harmful acts themselves.

If you convince yourself you were partly to blame for what happened to you when you weren’t, then you might end up blaming the ones you hurt for what you have done to them. It is a repeating cycle. What you do to yourself, you will do to others. The harm you do to others will also harm you. We are connected to each other that way.

There are many bad results from victim-blaming ourselves, from smaller to more serious mental health issues to turning ourselves into an offender.

Another issue with victim-blaming ourselves is getting stuck in victimhood. Finding peace in calling ourselves the bad guys seems strange to someone who has not experienced trauma and has had a normal, happy upbringing. This, however, is a reality for many trauma survivors. Abusers often confuse their victims by making it seem that their victim is the bad one, and they are the good guy. The popular modern term for this role change is gas-lighting. Whenever they hurt their victim, they tell them it was caused by something they did first. “You made me do this” or “Because you did that, I had to do this,” and so on. Slowly, the victim is coached into the distorted reality that they are bad, even when they have done nothing wrong.

Things like saying your opinion, choosing what you eat, and other small things most people take for granted, and as a human right, are made to be some evil that “forces” your oppressor to punish you”. If this often happens over time, especially to children, they might think they are bad when they are not. They do not choose to victim-blame themselves; they think it is a reality and a truth. In such cases, there must be someone to help them differentiate right from wrong and teach them how to behold life all over again. This can take time, and many will never receive help. They go back and forth between the state of victimhood and being “the bad guy” in a mental roundabout with no apparent exit.

And a portion of them will themselves become abusive towards others, as they have been taught a false narrative and worldview.

Victim-blaming ourselves can therefore be both a conscious idea of a noble act and the result of "brainwashing". Understanding these things and ourselves is therefore crucial for our recovery and how we treat others.

GODS SOLUTION TO SIN

- *How can God's sanctuary system reveal healing to victims? Does God's plan of salvation also give an answer to those suffering from the aftereffects of long-term abuse?*

The sacrificial system in the Old Testament is often dreaded reading for many Christians. It seems brutal and hard. Yet in them lies the key to freedom from oppression.

It should not be a big surprise, as Christ saying He can set us free was what this symbolism witnessed. The illustration in the sanctuary service has often been misunderstood.

Part of God's solution to sin is to place the blame where it belongs. Everyone is asked to take responsibility for their sins. Part of this responsibility is to confess it, understand the harm, regret it, and turn away from it. Meaning to stop harming others and ourselves. Then the most mentioned part takes place: the sacrifice itself.

When God, through the Day of Atonement, offered forgiveness to the sinners, He asked of them: "And ye shall afflict your souls» (Lev.16:1) If we want to stop the hurt, we need to search our hearts and be willing to do things differently.

The pagan religions sacrificed to their gods to please an angry god or gods. Unfortunately, the more association the Israelites had with pagan cultures, the more they misunderstood their own sacrificial system. They were not to sacrifice to an angry God to please him. Sacrifices do not please God; the meaning behind them does.

God reveals that if sin is not punished or atoned for, it makes people sick, and it spreads like a disease. Just like a victim becomes sick after a trauma is afflicted upon them. Sin traumatizes the human species. It kills us from the inside and out. If sin is not atoned for, it will drive us even more crazy. The point of the sacrificial system was to teach His people a healthy way to deal with the sin in their society and, at the same time, create the opportunity of a "new birth", a chance to start over, by having a substitute take the punishment. This substitute pointed to Christ. The perfect way to deal with sin is to confront it, but also to offer hope. Without hope, the perpetrator has no motive to change or do better. That is why every time we see God confront the sin of his people in the Bible, He always presents a hope, an alternative, or a solution. In hope lies the power to make a change.

In return for Christ taking our punishment, we are to take responsibility for our actions. If we don't, the sacrifice is pointless.

God said at a time when Jewish society was almost destroyed by sin: *«Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment» (Isa 1:5-6)

He further says: *«To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?»
(Isa.1:11-12)

He then tells them why their sacrifices are pointless: *«And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool» (Isa 1:15-18)

Their sacrifices were in vain when they did not understand their point. They thought they could sin and then just please God by bringing a sacrifice, and then everything would be fine.

It was not, for the sanctuary service was to bring resolution and closure. God knows that if He kept forgiving violators who did not take responsibility for their actions and do recompense to their victims, it would harm society and the victims and thus make everything worse. People would cry for justice.

"Tooth for a tooth and life for a life» was part of the law.

“And if any mischief follows, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exo.21:23-25)

If someone stole, they had to give it back with interest or make it up in some way. If someone destroyed someone else's life, they needed to compensate. Loss of income and life were to be dealt with, not just ignored. Many think these principles were changed when Jesus said: *«Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also»* (Matt.5:38-39)

Christ did not abolish compensation or decide that people no longer had to take responsibility. Nor did he abolish God's law (Matt.5:17) He adds a deeper reflection and urges people not to mistake God's intention and abuse it to be cruel without mercy. The same principles God revealed in the Old Testament, Christ too said: *«Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee;*

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing» (Matt.5:23-26)

Although Christ did say we should reconcile with those we have hurt before asking for His pardon through His sacrifice, He said that «an eye for an eye» is not always the solution.

In a society where there is no forgiveness or mercy for those who commit offenses, love will soon turn cold. Hope will keep them from changing and will inspire acts of desperation. Sometimes battling «evil» and searching for justice for ourselves will drain us and only harm us. God wanted us to be confident enough as His followers to dare to show mercy instead of getting even. Many who harm us are ignorant of their behavior. That does not excuse their actions, but by being that person who shows mercy, we can show them another way and perhaps even help them regret their actions. We can give them hope. Christ did not abolish the former law; He just showed that justice is important, but forgiveness is greater. One destroys, the other brings life. Despite the "eye for an eye" principle in God's law, God Himself practiced long-suffering mercy toward those who rebelled against him, as seen throughout the entire Old Testament. God did not get even when someone violated His law and even blasphemed Him; He tried to reason with them, work with them, educate them, and love them before being forced to punish them. Thus, the Old Testament God and Christ reveal the same principles of justice, namely that if mercy is possible, it is superior to get even.

In cases where it is not about revenge but to protect and help the victim, the latter statement of Christ would be more fitting than the «turn the cheek» statement. To leave our «gift at the altar» and then try to make amends to the person we hurt first is part of the reconciliation with God. Not even Jesus would want us to free an unapologetic killer from prison, as he would just kill again. If a man shoots one child, we should not hand him our next to shoot. Everything Christ says has to be evaluated from a bigger perspective, harmonizing with the law and His other words. By having a law for justice and the ability to choose mercy when possible, God is telling us not to judge blindly without discernment. To consider mercy if it is the better long-term solution, or punishing if that is the best. Christ is the law in flesh, the word in flesh, and we know His principles have not changed when Christ in the book of Revelation says to His people: “Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double” (Rev.18:6)

The principle of the law still stands, but it cannot be practiced lawlessly.

So, Christ's words do not abolish the past or the future; rather, they are another side of the issue brought forth.

It is important for our wellbeing that when using an «eye for an eye» it is not to feed our hatred but to protect victims. If we use Christ's saying of turning the other cheek wrongly, then it would also mean we should let all prisoners be released from prison. This is hardly what Christ meant by it. In fact, the apostle Paul tells us to be obedient to our government, as it acts as God's hand to punish transgressors: *«Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer» (Rom.13;1-5)

Paul claims that God has encouraged and supported the government's practice of putting people on trial and in prison for crimes against others. Only when the law conflicted with God's law or God's commands did Paul transgress, which is why he ended up in prison himself.

The sanctuary service shows God's justice. His law was to give a definition of right and wrong. The law is what defines sin. Further, God created mankind, and His moral laws are designed to keep them healthy, but when broken, they create stress and diseases in the mind and body. Although scientists have not fully understood this yet, human creation was created by God's intelligent design to function in harmony with the moral laws. They cannot be separated from each other without causing disease and death. Moral laws are not just about feelings and the mind; they affect every cell, organ, and genetic law in our body. Even sound and smell affect our bodies.

Further, without a standard to define right from wrong, there would be no way to give peace to the afflicted. For those who have been subjected over time to the idea of good being bad and bad being good, there are great mental issues and confusion. Especially because it is disruptive to bodily health. If there was no moral law designed for mankind from creation, there is nothing to judge after. Everyone will have their own perception of right and wrong, and punish each other in different ways when their perception of right is broken. This is the definition of the biblical term “lawlessness”. When the laws that God has created to harmonize with the human body are replaced by laws that do not work with it. To create an extreme situation to illustrate the point. There are many people who think sexual activity with children isn't wrong. If the child consents, it does not have to be wrong, they claim. While others are very determined that a child cannot make that decision and that it is wrong no matter what, here are two different opinions of what is right, and from them, you can in theory create two different laws. The same is true with abortion. To one, it is murder; to the other, it is health treatment. Or clashes between men and women in the western world. A man might think it is morally fine to seduce and sleep with a woman, only to dump her when he is satisfied. While for others, this is morally wrong. Some eat dogs; others consider this a horrible thing. People's morals and ways of viewing life are extremely diverse.

Anyone who has taken time to study narcissism knows how a strong person can destroy another by constantly changing the rules as they see fit or how it suits them best. Which is what would happen if there were no rules. We have a society where the strong and least conscious people make laws that suit their egos, and if you do the same, and it does not suit them that you do, they will make one rule for them and one for you. It will confuse, suppress, and create constant ambiguity. The strongest will always win. Children who grow up without rules and a safe set of boundaries often become anxious and struggle with making decisions. Laws and organizations create safety and secure fairness. If the same moral laws apply to everyone, rich or poor alike, powerful or ordinary alike, it secures a fair judgment. God's laws are not made to suppress; they are made to secure safety and freedom. To hinder and minimize suppression.

If people are allowed to make God's laws on His behalf, we can see a glimpse of the consequences it would bring by observing the religious chaos in the world today. Every congregation and every religion have made up their own rules and traditions. Some are bad, many are suppressive, and others are good. Overall, the difference in viewing morals and worship causes clashes and disharmony. When man makes rules, he does not see the complete picture, and, feeling a need for control to combat chaos, he creates suppressive laws to control people. To control what he fears, what he cannot see or predict,

which is in reality creating biased laws in blindness. Whenever a new situation comes up, they create another law, then someone does something unusual, and another law is made until they end up with hundreds and even thousands of laws. Once the laws are applied to every little aspect of life, it is close to impossible to discern them from a wider perspective. The laws become blind and can end up harming those they were originally meant to protect. Every country has its set of laws today, as does every society, even small communities living in desolated areas. Because a society cannot function healthily without laws. Societal laws create a community of cooperation, which helps people cooperate with each other to work together to grow and feel safe. It also serves as a protection that one strong person can take over the direction a society takes on a wimpy and personal basis.

So is the intention with God's law; only His is perfect, as it is designed especially for creation. (Psalm 19:7, [Isaiah 8:20](#), [Romans 7:16](#), [Romans 7:12](#))

While the world still struggles with chaos and ever-changing government structures and laws, had God's law been followed, there would be peace. God's law addresses the causes behind all issues, while the laws of the world often stumble in the dark, using laws to blindly target potential enemies, failing to see that disruptive society is tied to their sins. Human laws are ever-changing; after who cries the loudest, after who complains, after who was last the victim, it shifts like the emotions of a child ([Isaiah 3:1-7-1-7](#)). Laws are made by manipulation of emotions. One law protects one person but causes harm to another. Man is willing to adjust laws for family, but not for strangers. They are easily emotionally bribed by their need for recognition. Trying to satisfy sinful desire and protect man at the same time, and it does not work. It's like trying to press a square shape into a smaller, round hole. It is trying the impossible. A sinner cannot produce a perfect law. They can only produce a flawed one because they are flawed. Their vision and sense of justice are constantly biased. No matter how the governmental structure is made or how many laws are made, we can see that there is no peace on earth. Not even a single neighborhood is safe. Though, had there been no laws, there would be even more problems than those we are already seeing.

Because of man's imperfections and fickleness, God has not given it into the hands of man to create the definition of sin. That would be unfair to mankind. God's definition of what constitutes sin is tied to His knowledge and science of His own creation. What feels right and good to one man might not do him or others any good. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro.14:12)

God knows how every cell in our body is constructed. He knows our DNA perfectly. He knows the secrets of the "brain" in our heart and gut.

God's laws are based on understanding completely what destroys man from the inside and what destroys a society.

God claims that for the world, He has to be the creator of the law, He decides what is right and wrong. It's for our protection against sinful lawgivers. Sin is the breaking of God's law, not man's. (1Jn_3:4) God has created a law that should protect people from traumatic experiences that damage the soul, mind, and body, yet God knew the law would be broken. And so, He created the sanctuary service, showing that when sin is committed, it is critical that the road to recovery contain full repentance and regret, an acknowledgment that they had done something wrong, and a wish to change and not repeat these transgressions. In addition, the perpetrator had to pay compensation to their victim. If their crime was horrible, God ordered the death penalty. And this was at a time when it was not possible to

imprison people for life. Either they walked free, were tortured under inhumane circumstances in a dungeon where they would slowly die of natural causes, or they were put to death immediately. Even the death penalty was meant to protect the victim and future victims, not to satisfy an angry God. God is not in danger from a violent man; He is safe. The harsh punishment was meant to protect people here. Dealing with sin was to provide a conclusion for the victims.

For many victims, the road to recovery starts and ends with their transgressor taking full responsibility for what they did without blaming the victim for their actions. Mankind has a massive hunger for justice when there has been an injustice. God created us that way so that we would live in harmony and not sin against each other. Unfortunately, we have become biased, and our hunger for justice seems to end when we are the ones doing the harm. If a perpetrator does not take responsibility and admit their wrongdoings, they further harm their victim. The need for justice drives many insane; they don't get peace if they don't get it. There is no closure.

The sanctuary system is not just the individual taking responsibility; it shows the whole plan of salvation, from Christ's death on the cross to the final judgment. Those who do not repent will not receive pardon through the blood of Christ.

This is why repentance is so important in the Bible and is repeated. There is no justice without it. Christ died to atone for our sin, but He cannot repent on our behalf. Where there is no repentance, the hunger for justice remains. If you have experienced someone hurting you, their not regretting it makes it hard for you to not take the bad experience with you.

It was John the Baptist's message: «Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.» (Matt.3:2)

It was Christ's message: «From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand» (Matt.4:17)

It was the disciple's message: «And they went out, and preached that men should repent» (Mark 6:12).

Christ saying: «I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish» (Luk.13:3).

Peter said: «Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost» (Acts 2:38).

In the book of Revelation, Christ tells five of His churches to repent of their wrong actions.

He says: «As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten be zealous therefore, and repent» (Rev.3:19)

The importance of repentance is that it is the only way for us to change and take responsibility. Christ's blood can take our punishment, but it cannot stop us from continuing to harm others and ourselves.

Everyone wants justice, and everyone cries out to God to deal with their oppressors. If we treat others badly, they will complain about us before God, too. God will judge mankind for all their harm.

However, if we are willing to take accountability for our actions, He sees potential that He can work with. «For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God» (Rom.3:23) That is why He asks us to repent, not only for our own sake but also so that those we have hurt can get closure and healing. When we repent of a wrongful action done towards another, we elevate their worth and give them some peace to move on. We set them free from the harm we had caused.

God's law's place in this is to ensure everyone is judged and measured according to the same standard. A fair standard. «So, the *law* is holy, and the commandment is holy and *righteous* and good» (Rom.7:12) Although the law is righteous, it cannot make any of us righteous. It is just something to be measured by. It is understanding its principles; to understand our sin when beholding it, we must go to God with repentance and seek pardon through Christ's blood.

The law does not transform us; it exposes us. Normally, when we are exposed, we either fight back or protect ourselves. Neither of the two can bring about a change within us. This is why the law exposes, but Christ's mercy changes. When we are offered mercy, we are given hope. Hope and love inspire the change. So, the law does not give a remedy or a solution; its accusation only feels threatening and makes us defensive. Christ's love, however, and His compassion in taking our punishment, removing the threat from us, can help us change where the law cannot. Seeing someone take our punishment should provide a safe place to confess and reflect that what we did was wrong. If we do not, we make Christ's sacrifice of no effect.

Without the law condemning us, we do not look for the mercy that inspires change. In addition, the law protects our human worth and will judge those who harm us and do not regret it.

God's throne is therefore a combination of truth and mercy: «Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other» (Psalm 85:10). Both are important for our salvation.

The abuse of God's system in the Old Testament and in the Christian era is the same. In both instances, God's offer of forgiveness through the sacrifice is used to excuse sin rather than repent of it. "Sacrificing" without taking responsibility. The sanctuary system that pointed to Christ reveals to us that such a gospel is a false gospel. (Heb.10:26) This false gospel brings a lot of hurt to Christian churches.

If we refuse to repent, God will seek revenge: «For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people» (Heb 10:30) To many, this seems brutal, but God is seeking revenge to uphold justice.

If someone does us great harm, and we are willing to forgive them if we just see a glimpse of regret and self-reflection, but instead are met with more abuse in return for our kindness, we would and should want to see that person held accountable. God will hold people who refuse to acknowledge the harm they cause accountable. They will not be invited to heaven or the new earth to continue their havoc there. It is a fair judgment.

"The one who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. But to the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur." (Rev.21:8)

Most people understand these principles when harm has been done to them. They are less inclined to understand this principle when they harm others. We want God to punish those who make offenses against us, but we do not wish to be punished when we do the same.

God is fair and treats us all the same. He judges by the same standard, He offers the same recovery program for everyone and the same atonement. It is up to us, and it is our responsibility to take part in His solution.

God gave us this trade. He says if we accept Him giving us a new chance and forgiveness, we should also let him give a man who repents of the evil done to us a new chance and forgiveness. If he is truly sorry, that is (Matt.18:21-35). This way, Christ also pleads with those we have hurt to reason with them to tolerate Him forgiving us.

God has no choice; He cannot favor someone above another. Have one law for one person and another for another. We are all in the same situation.

If this causes us to think God does not demand people take responsibility for their actions and allows transgressors to transgress, we have listened to the false gospel.

All who wish to receive God's pardon must repent.

For most victims, this is all they want to see. That the abuser or perpetrator understands the hurt they have caused, regrets it, and desires a chance. In that alone lies the closure a good Christian needs. When there is no repentance, there is no closure for the victim; the only other alternative must be to punish them to bring peace. So, either we get closure by repentance and change or by them being punished. This is exactly God's way of seeking justice for man. Demanding repentance and change, or He will revenge the evil done. This is to bring closure to all sin in the world.

Another part we should address briefly and not forget is that God too has been attacked. When we oppose God, we sin against Him. We sin against life and our life giver. We sin against our redemption and our healing. We sin against ourselves. Although God is all powerful, a wrong deed toward Him is still wrong and in violation of nature. We have His breath of life in our lungs. We are connected to Him genetically and emotionally. As destroying parts of our body would physical harm us, fighting God harms us equally. If He accepts sin done to Him, He will encourage rebellion against all laws and the standard He has set.

Jesus said "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men" (**Matthew 12:31**) Here he says that even blaspheme against Him will have a chance of pardon. Why cannot sin against the Holy Spirit be pardoned?

Jesus said: "And when he [Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8) It is the Holy Spirit that guides us to repent and convinces us we have done something wrong. If we reject that voice and reject our guilt, there is no pardon. If we sin against God and receive the reproof of the spirit, we can still find redemption and be united with our life giver and sustainer.

When someone does not repent after hurting you. Even if it is a minor conflict, we feel worthless around that same person. When sin is excused indirectly, it is said that what harmed us was justified in some way. When God says there is no excuse for our sins, He is telling us how much we are worth as human beings. He is saying to you that you are worth something and that no sin committed against you is justified, no matter the circumstance. He says the same to the ones we hurt. That person is worth more than how we treated them. We have no excuse to harm others. No noble cause can be used to defend ourselves. A human is worth more than that. God is very misunderstood. He is fighting for humans' worth and rights more than humans do themselves. He elevates man in His judgments, while we downgrade and stupefy ourselves rather than admitting wrong. Many are content with their lives,

like Job said, leaving a trail of wounded and hurt people behind them. Just because someone is happy despite sinning does not mean their sin is not a sin. The damage exposes the sin.

Those who refuse to repent of wrongs done to others are treating them like pawns in the chess of life. A necessary sacrifice to achieve a goal. God's strictness against this way of thinking is tied to His great love for every human life. Our bodies were not created to be afflicted. We are designed to live in a world without sin. The trauma scars we all carry were not God's intention for mankind. He wants to again bring us into harmony with a world where we are not constantly harmed anymore and can live with the physical and mental strength we are supposed to.

False gospels

Everyone has experienced the hurt that follows a terrible apology. When you confront someone and get a «I am sorry you feel that way», or «Sorry you took it that way», or "Sorry you responded that way» it confuses and hurts. They apologize on your behalf, not their own. They blame you for responding negatively to their act, rather than just apologizing for their behavior. This type of apology brings closure to the transgressor, but not to the transgressed. It is an attempt to close an «infected wound». The hurt will continue to resurface over and over. Our souls do not respond restfully to this type of «apology». We are not built for it.

God does not accept this type of «repentance" either, as it is not really regret.

Another example of someone not repenting is when they claim the good they did makes up for the wrong. When confronted with the harm they caused, they say: «You only remember the bad things, what about all the good things? ».

Many childhood trauma victims suffer from this exact thing. Their parents or guardians bought them clothes and food, yet at the same time, they mentally or physically harmed them. Being told that the good they did should outweigh the bad leaves the wounded feeling guilty or unreasonable for wanting recompense or an apology. Not getting closure, they continue feeling hurt.

God does not accept that we use the good things we have done to defend our bad actions. The pagan religions often had this concept, especially in Egypt, where when a person died, their good and bad deeds were placed on a scale, and it was determined that whatever weighed the most was what they were judged by. So, if the evil deed weighed most, you would be punished by the gods of the underworld as a bad person.

Catholicism is a Christian direction that also presents the idea that good deeds can make up for the bad ones. You could pay your way out of punishment through pilgrimage or other acts, even paying money. If your good deeds outweigh the bad, you are in God's favor again. This way of «atoning sin» only causes more damage. We legalize sin through good deeds. We cannot harm others and then bribe God to forgive us. This would not bring closure and recompense to those harmed by the wrong actions. It would only cause bitterness towards God, as it also did during the Middle Ages when this was practiced by many. The large amount of abuse in the Catholic Church is in part the result of this mentality. Priests commit the unthinkable but still think they are in God's favor when they are not.

Another extreme example is the Austrian man named Josef Fritzl who held his daughter «in prison» in the basement, depriving her of healthcare, sunlight, and proper oxygen and subjecting her to horrible torture for twenty-four years. When confronted with his crime, he claimed not to be a monster because he could have killed her. He fed her through all those years and helped her sick daughter get medical care. He claimed the media was "unfair and entirely one dimensional". He also claimed the nice things he did should be addressed as well to bring balance to how people view him. It shows the extreme delusion behind this way of reasoning. Normally, the situation is not as extreme as this one, but in everyday life, when harm is done to someone, and they are confronted, many choose this approach to the accusation. Rather than apologizing, they bring their attention to some good they have done for them and try to make them feel guilty for seeking an apology for the bad. This is another way of dealing with wrongs that does not give the victim closure or self-worth.

(<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/josef-fritzl-i-am-a-victim-not-a-monster/28436413.html> / <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/fritzl-speaks-i-knew-what-i-was-doing-was-wrong-a-552224.html>)

Again, when we hurt others, we cannot point to something right we did to make our case with God. No one would listen to Joseph Fritzl and everyone found his statements shocking without self-reflection.

Nor will God listen to us if we use the same logic, although perhaps for lesser offenses than Fritzl. The idea that we can defend a wrong by making a right. Or worse, we want credit for the evil we could have done but did not.

And so, in God's sanctuary, where sin is dealt with, only repentance without excuse is accepted.

If someone hurts us, we are not allowed to hurt others. We have no excuse. By this, we know God demands we ask for forgiveness correctly with self-reflection and knowing and admitting that there was no excuse to harm another being. Perhaps there was a reason, but there is no excuse.

God understands cause and reaction. But regarding sin, He does not allow it to receive pardon. Everyone is asked to take responsibility for their actions. No good deed can hide a bad deed, no blame can be shifted to free us, no trauma done to us gives us permission to afflict others trauma. Every sin in the sanctuary and before Christ must be confessed and dealt with right away to bring closure to individuals, for the good of society, and for the sake of the peace of the universe.

In this understanding, we can see that God does not tolerate in any way any crime committed against us. He is not condoning or excusing any bad action taken against us. He did not condone it because of the aggressor's past. He frees us from the responsibility of someone else's sin toward us. He only asks us to take responsibility for our own. If the one person who hurt us does not repent, God tells us not to be afraid to run into that person in heaven. He says: «To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste» (Deu.32:35)

Paul writes: «*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*» (Rom.12:19-21)

We are not told here to accept cruelty. Here is the principle most nations follow: the offended and victim should not take "the law in their hands," but rather let the courts do the sentencing and punishment. God is a God of order. He has a court and a sentence ready for those who refuse to repent.

When the courts here on earth fail us, He asks us not to take the law into our own hands but to let Him judge and sentence our offender.

Be assured. If those who have hurt you do not regret and atone for what they did, God will make him/her pay in his time.

King David is an example in the Bible of how to address one's own sin. He said, after sleeping with another man's wife and indirectly causing his death: «Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me ...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. ..For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.» (Psa 51:2-3.10.17)

Despite forgiving David, God did not take away the consequences of his actions. God allowed him to be punished by them. God confronted him, punished him, and showed him mercy, so David could seek a change in his life and do better.

God allowed David to remain king despite his sin. When his predecessor, Saul, sinned, however, God took the kingdom from him. Not because of the sin, but because there was no repentance. He, unlike David, would not take responsibility for his sins and continued to make excuses for them (1Sa 13:11-12, 1Sa 15:21). The difference between the king God rejected, and the king God protected, was not that one was without fault. They both sinned in a serious way. The difference was how they responded to God's call for repentance. How they responded to the Holy Spirit telling them of their sin. God could not work with Saul when he refused to take accountability, learn, and understand what he did wrong.

God knows any victim who does not receive compassion, settlement, and closure will struggle with mental health. Because he wants to free us from being bound by our scars, He wants us to believe in Him seeing the injustice and having a plan to meet it. God is going to bring us closure, and in the belief that someone cares about our worth, our pain, and our damage even if no one else does, we are to find sanity, strength, and freedom. Justice will come.

How Satan uses the Bible to force us to submit to him

- *In this chapter, we will look at how Christians sometimes go on Satan's errand and further harm victims. Are some scriptures in the Bible used to silence victims and let the guilty go free? Can our sin prevent us from seeking justice for others?*

There are real victims and real hurt. To a lesser and greater degree, everyone is a victim of someone. It would be hard to go through life and not, at some point, be the victim of another's sin. At the same time, most of us have done wrong toward others as well. In no way does this justify or excuse their or our behavior. Many Christians fall into the trap of a lack of empathy because Christ told us to forgive others as He forgives us and «not to judge or we will be judged». We know we have sinned, and so we feel we are forced to look away when others sin in the hope of forgiveness for ourselves.

Such was the case with David. He had slept with another man's wife and indirectly caused his death, followed by deep agony and repentance. When his son later violated his half-sister Tamar, David must have felt the hypocrisy of the thought of judging and sentencing him for his crime when he himself had been forgiven by God. So, he did not judge him, and by doing so, he further violated his daughter, who would feel worthless in it all. It says: «So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house» (2.Sam.13:20). Tamar's spirit was killed. The one word, "desolate," describing her situation says a lot. Nothing more is said about her, and this is the last we hear of her. One word is all we get, that she «remained» «desolate».

David's other son, Tamar's brother, was filled with anger over the lack of justice. He watched her «desolate» in his house. He hungered for justice, but it never came. For two years, he waited, and then he decided to take matters into his own hands and kill his brother.

David's hesitation to act because of his sin brought him even more misery than he could have imagined. His sin eventually cost him four children. His baby, his daughter's mental breakdown, his firstborn son's death, and his other son rebelling and then getting himself killed in the process.

As it was with David, so it is with us. If we are conscious of our sin, we are less likely to demand justice when others sin. This happens at the cost of new victims. Satan knows all about this loophole, and he uses it to bring sin into the churches.

If no one dares to judge or interfere when injustice is done, the church can easily become a paradise for perpetrators. What is supposed to be a haven on earth becomes a house full of predators. Satan is keeping everyone's private sins alive by reminding them of them repeatedly, even though they have been atoned for. Once we are broken by it, he can introduce others who sin similarly, and we will not feel right judging them. Although we seek change ourselves, the one we permit to sin might not.

When Christ said, "not to judge to not be judged", it was not against the punishment of crimes. Naturally, crimes must be paid for. A willingness to take responsibility for our sins is therefore the best way to demand that others take responsibility for theirs. In a way, this is what David did. He was open about his sin; he humiliated himself before everyone with his transparency and repentance. This caused

some to think of him as pathetic and dislike his leadership. But by humiliating himself, he at the same time took away other people's excuse to commit his crimes. He did not make his sin seem lucrative or tempting. Had he hidden his sin, he would have justified others' sin. If he was not punished, it would be justified that no one else was. God did punish David along with the forgiveness as a warning against David's sin. Still, while dealing with his sin correctly and trying to do the right thing, his sin did prevent him from seeking justice for Tamar.

In David's story, we do not see perfection, but we learn a lot about cause and effect.

To be in a position to judge injustice, we need to also be willing to be judged ourselves. Here, we can regain the power to act when injustice is done. It is hypocrisy that destroys. Not allowing anyone to hold us accountable, but then holding others accountable.

To strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Many of the damaging sins are not the most obvious. On the other side, the larger issues are often neglected, and instead a culture of judging little things emerges to compensate and give churchgoers a false sense of righteousness.

In everyday life, people are quick to judge each other on every little, small thing to feel superior after feeling small because of greater issues. It is truly destructive for relationships, churches, and society when a group feels "holier" than others and criticizes others' small mistakes at every opportunity. They are like parasites, they live off «sucking the life out» of someone else. They feed off finding fault in others. Their whole self-esteem is built on pushing others down. They can't find their worth unless they demean others' worth.

This way of elevating others resembles caricature illustrators, who exaggerate people's characteristics to create a comical version of them. This is how very critical people view others; they think they are seeing the truth about them, but they are just exaggerating and overly focused on small things, letting it cloud their understanding of others. Although the caricature drawer's exaggeration of people's physical characteristics has a base of truth, the image is still a lie.

Jesus said: «Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye» (Luke 6:41-43)

Christ is not here speaking of letting rapists, abusers, bullies, thieves, and murderers go free. (Rev 22:15; Gal.5:21) He is talking about the smaller things that need to be addressed the right way. Many use this example from the Bible, but then forget the last sentence: «Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye». Christ was not against the «splinter» being pointed out and removed, He was against those who judge others in a far worse situation. «Splinters» don't destroy the church, «beams» do.

At the time Christ spoke these words, the Jewish nation had become obsessed with smaller issues while rejecting their Messiah and the greater issues. There was poverty, discrimination, adultery, and basically overall ill human treatment. They let it slide, but when it came to small ritualistic things, they became judges and executors without mercy.

Jesus said: *«Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone» (Matt.23:23)*

I knew a woman who was a multimillionaire Christian. When she saw suffering and fellow Christians in need, she had no problem looking away. When a pastor came asking for a loan, she would send him away empty-handed. She even managed to get a man without a job dying of cancer to pay half the cost for her project. However, she was superb at eating healthily. Whenever she would join a study and prayer group and the topic of sin would come up, it was always the same sin she wanted to address. «The sin» of eating chocolate, if conquered, would bring you closer to her holy self. The sin of chocolate came up often. It is true that chocolate is not healthy, but it is hardly what to deem someone holy by.

Many refuse to address their own bigger sins while dwelling on the smaller mistakes of others. Or they will focus on a sin that is not a temptation to them to feel superior to others.

When Christ spoke of not judging others, He was likely trying to address hypocrisy by not letting the guilty off the hook.

Forgiveness = no consequence?

If the things Christ said are taken out of their greater context, a Christian will feel compelled to let the «bad guy» go free thinking Christ wants that. Many times, a victim in the church is persuaded by leaders or the church board to not report the incident to authorities and that they are only a good Christian and excepted by Christ if they let the perpetrator go unpunished. Then the perpetrator goes free and can continue harming others. This is a misuse of Christ's words, a violation of God's law and the gospel. The victim becomes «the problem» that must be solved. The accusation is viewed as a disturbance of peace, not the perpetrator or their acts. The whistleblower is guilt-tripped into remaining silent.

It is important for those in leading positions in the church to live a good life without hypocrisy so that they can address injustice in the church. About a church leader, Paul wrote: «A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil» (1.Tim.3:2-7)

The whole congregation's healthy progress depends on good men and women who can lead in a good way. Not a man trapped in a circle of sinful behavior, not willing or daring to address the evil in his church.

Paul, here, says the «bishop» should not have a beam in his eye. Still, he must be able to emphasize with those who have failed to help them do what is right. It is this balance that sometimes becomes hard.

The principle of not judging before repenting and changing ourselves is seen in the Old Testament as well. When someone in Israel stole gold and fancy clothing, God would not let them punish the Canaanites in the battle against Ai. Only when they had dealt with the «sin in the camp», the sin among themselves, could they help God execute judgment over that city.

The same situation happened later when the tribe of Benjamin gang raped and killed a woman and threatened a stranger, among other crimes. The rest of the tribes of Israel demanded Benjamin hand out the criminals for judgment, but they refused and protected them. The tribe showed no remorse or willingness to change, and so the other tribes declared war upon them.

Twice they went out to war, and both times they lost more men than the tribe of Benjamin did. Both times they asked for God's council, and He agreed they should punish them, yet He did not help them get victory, and so that perplexed them greatly. Why would God tell them to judge but not help them execute judgment?

The third time, they came crying before God and asked again. This time, they were no longer self-righteous. They humbled themselves and confessed their sins: «and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD» (Jdg.20:26) Through the sacrifices, they made atonement for the sins that they confessed. When they asked God again if they should go against the tribe of Benjamin, God finally told them He would help them and cause them to win. (Judges chap.20)

Again, we see the same principles. God let mankind take part in the judgment of their fellow men, but they must make amends for their crimes first. If not, God is partial, and He will condone one sin and punish another. God is always fair. So, when pleading for justice, we need to make sure we do not have unresolved sins ourselves.

In a way, this helps God ensure we show compassion in our judgment, just as we ourselves needed compassion.

Christ's words must be put in context with the whole Bible and God's dealings with sin and sinners throughout. This helps us understand that Christ's words were not meant to let the sinner off the hook without being held accountable. «For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged» (1Co 11:31)

Satan has taken Christ's words out of context and made many churches his playground. Many dare not try to change anything or hold others accountable.

Paul claims that a church has to deal with those who ruin the congregation: *«But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person»* (1Co 5:11-13).

To keep a congregation healthy, there is a need for those who are in leading positions to know they have done wrong and step down and take responsibility for their actions so that everyone will have to do the same.

Unfortunately, there is often hypocrisy, and no one wishes to take responsibility for their own sins or those of others.

James's advice is: *«Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you»* (James 4:7-10)

James also said: *«Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective»* (James 5:16)

Forgiveness as a threat

Another verse Satan often uses to get his way in the churches is from the Lord's Prayer.

«And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us» (Luke 11:4)

We must be willing to forgive others, especially when seeking forgiveness ourselves. Christ does not like us to wish a good treatment for ourselves and a bad treatment for others.

Satan often twists this verse to suit his agenda of cursing the congregations. The verse can be used to force victims into a state where they are further traumatized. By making their trauma and emotional and physical scars evidence that they have not forgiven their transgressor, and thus God will not forgive them. Not only are they hurt, but now they are told that God will use their «scars» as an excuse to lock them out of heaven. So, the bad guy is given entrance, and the victim is told they will be shut out. Many victims within churches feel forced to meet their abusers and bullies and not speak up or say a word. If they do, God is said to be dissatisfied with them. They make God a narcissist. Christian narcissists love quoting this verse to escape accountability and divert the blame back onto the victim. Satan has, with the false gospel, removed forgiveness for sin from responsibility and repentance, so abusers enjoy a freedom not offered to their victims.

The blame for any tension is put on the victim. It is easy to understand why many victims leave the churches and even end up hating «God». To them, God is the defender of the one who hurt them, which makes the victim feel of no value. Countless victims growing up in churches become Satanists and eager atheists. It is their way of combating the God who loved their oppressor and took part in the abuse against them. Unaware that it was Satan, in whose case they now advance, that tricked them and represented the values they hated. They hate God's judgment because they feel it is unfair to them. In an abuser-victim situation where trauma has been afflicted upon someone, «forgiving» that person will not take away the consequences. We know many of the diseases afflicting long-term trauma survivors are permanent. Especially those silenced. Science shows how important a support team is for recovery. How important it is for the victim to communicate their hurt and experience is to their healing. When the victim gets to speak about what has happened, they can get the much-needed help they need to understand that what happened to them was wrong and that any manipulation they have experienced is just that. Often, they need help just distinguishing right from wrong. Any church or congregation with respect for the principles seen in God's law and the gospel will remove the perpetrator and help the victim first. The victim must not be silenced for the sake of their transgressor. Neither should the victim be forced nor pressured to forgive or tolerate their abuser unless they are well enough and wish to do so. If forgiving is happening under the threat that God will place them in hell if

they don't, it is not authentic forgiveness that can heal. Healing takes time. The scars must not be considered hate; rather, they are a consequence of sin.

To create a metaphor. It is like when someone hits someone else's car and leaves a gigantic dent in the side. He may apologize and even be forgiven, but the dent in the side will not magically disappear. Sin has a harmful effect upon the human body; it leaves a «dent» and “scratches”. No matter how much the person who hit the car apologizes, the dent must be fixed. This means the one who hit the car, in addition to apologizing, , should pay for it to be fixed. The fix takes time, depending on how large the damage is and how much was affected on the inside of the car.

Now imagine how ridiculous it would be if people pointed to the dent in the car as evidence you had not forgiven the one who crashed into you and created it. That you were flashing the dent for attention, or keeping it there to demonstrate you would rather not forgive. If the dent was considered a threat or accusation against the other driver, what if the other driver took offense at the damage, blamed you, and refused to pay for it but still demanded you show him mercy and don't report him? The ridiculous claim that the dent was created because your car was too soft or sensitive in the crash? Or the car's damage was caused by it being a “cheap car” and so it is your fault for driving a “cheap car”. None of these excuses would work in the real world if you hit someone's car. So, if they don't pay, and you can't pay for it either, you will have to drive around with that dent or damage, and it will be a visible and continued reminder that this person crashed into your car.

Many victims are expected to magically not have any trauma response or damage from trauma. Some think that forgiving someone should magically remove the mental damage.

It is either considered their weakness or a stubborn inability to forgive. Any signs of anxiety and depression are considered self-inflicted because they do not forgive. They put more blame, shame on someone already struggling, while «the Christian love» is given to their transgressor. Even if a victim forgives, they should still be able to choose distance from their transgressor and be allowed to recover from the hurt. Because the body does not forget. Instincts and reflexes do not forget. Many victims can and will have a bodily stress reaction around a transgressor, even if they choose to forgive. It's our built-in defense mechanism. It is why we are extra careful around a hot plate after accidentally touching it. It has nothing to do with bitterness toward the hot plate. Our bodies are created to learn from mistakes and protect ourselves if the threat repeats. A victim can choose to ignore these bodily warning signs and choose to have contact with an offender, yet eventually, they might find themselves running on empty. The body is constantly stressed because it perceives danger, even if we push that inner voice away. If we ignore this stress, it will destroy us. If a perpetrator is sorry and has changed their behavior, the victim can learn to regain trust and relax around them. Anything is possible. The body can learn and be adjusted, but it won't be easily fooled.

Where there is no admission of guilt, the victim cannot outrun their warning system. A perpetrator may become a better person quickly, but the speed of their transition might not harmonize with the speed of the victim's healing. So, they are still, in many cases, best separated.

I doubt Christ's words were meant to acquit the transgressor and put their victim on trial instead. This is hardly consistent with the rest of the Bible and the principles in «the law and the testimony» or the apostles. (Isa.8:20) It is a twisting and misuse of scripture. Christ wanted us to forgive each other more easily for our small trespasses. The little things that happen too often can become big issues.

People constantly make small mistakes . Jealousy, thoughtlessness, and a selfish decision. If we are constantly demanding perfection from people , we will hurt them and ourselves. God asks us to show some grace, be quick to forgive, and move on for our own and others' good. When it comes to bigger crimes, however, a different approach is needed to not give a bad person the space to continue causing harm.

«Therefore, the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth» (Heb.1:4)

God shows great frustration when His people do not protect the victims.

«The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed» (Psalm 103:6)

«The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence» (Psalm 11:5)

«The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble» (Psalm.9:9)

Jesus did not tell us to let the transgressors who have hurt us go free. Jesus gave this example: *«If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector» (Matt.18:15-17)*

Basically, Jesus' words against not judging were not to be used in instances like these. If he refuses to take responsibility, he should be exposed and treated accordingly.

I had the unfortunate experience of getting to know a church that did not follow the right procedure.

As a child, I participated a few times in a Bible study class in a church while visiting a family member who went to that church. I really liked the Bible teacher; he was charismatic and friendly. He seemed genuinely interested in what he talked about and the children who he had the lesson for.

Many years later, I would learn of the tragedy surrounding this man. He had taken advantage of at least three girls in the church, unrelated to each other, and stolen their innocence. The three girls were sexually assaulted several years apart, but the church failed to act on the information they had. The first time they learned about these accusations, they decided that he seemed to explain himself well, and he was popular and kind, so they decided to keep it a secret. Being open about this man's possible sin would ruin his life, and so they kept quiet and protected him. Because they kept it a secret, the next family in the church was unaware of his history and went on vacation with him and his wife. When going home, they felt safe leaving their young daughter in their company. The young girl was then groomed and sexually assaulted. This would never have happened if the church board had understood the importance of dealing with sin correctly. To hold the sinner accountable and protect their congregation, not the transgressor. And to use the law enforcement in the country, set there by God to judge in such a matter, to make sure he was punished and the victim vindicated and given a chance to heal. Punishment is not evil; it is a blessing for victims and potential victims. Someone who does not receive a hard punishment for a terrible crime is more likely to repeat it. The easier it is to get away, the easier it is to repeat the crime. Even for smaller offenses, punishment helps us develop a bodily

warning reaction against repeating the offense. If you steal a little chocolate from the store as a kid and are caught and receive unpleasant consequences, the child learns that the crime was not worth the pleasure and is less likely to repeat it. If the punishment is too hard and severe for the crime, the opposite effect is created, and the child is more likely to rebel against authority and commit worse crimes. Therefore, the hell-preaching many do, saying God will torture a man forever for a short-lived life in sin here on earth, awakens rebellion in many against God's authority. The punishment does not fit the crime. A pagan understanding of hell is preached in many churches, and it has helped Satan paint God as an unrighteous, crazy, and revengeful sadist.

Because too severe a punishment for a certain crime harms someone, Satan can also use this to another extreme and suggest anarchy against law and punishment. So, on the one hand, Satan tries to rock the boat by claiming God's judgments are unfair, and on the other side, he suggests anarchy, which is basically giving people the freedom to do harmful acts and say harmful words without being held accountable.

Punishment is a blessing if used correctly. If there is no consequence for a wrongdoing, it will be repeated. Punishment is meant to protect victims and the perpetrator at the same time. God is merciful and wants to save the perpetrator if he can, but the likelihood of him realizing his mistake without facing consequences is low. The punishment therefore protects but also chastises the perpetrator into a state of reflection and desire for change. If evil acts have evil consequences, the act itself is less of a temptation. If punishment doesn't rehabilitate them, they ought to be punished for the safety of the victims alone.

God punishes the sinner to some degree, even when offering them forgiveness. Usually, this punishment from God lets them face the consequences of their actions, so they can learn from their mistakes. To see and experience the harm they created to better understand why it is wrong.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby» (Heb.12:6-11)

God punishes for the sake of our victims and for our own sake, so we can reflect and become better people. Just like parents do when they punish their children. Any parent hates to see their child be an unkind bully or mean person. They will wish to correct them, so they can help them become a better people for their own sake and for others. This is precisely why God scorns us, too.

Satan loves quoting scripture and using the Bible to fool Christians into either being too soft or too hard. Both can argue from scripture and cause a congregation to think they are just following the Bible and doing God's service when they are serving the devil's agenda.

Being fair is essential for a healthy church. To put the blame in the right place, to protect people from being victimized, and to show a fair consequence for those who harm.

The devil uses the Bible to turn black into white and white into black. He will use “forgive, or you won’t be forgiven” to a severely wounded person and use scripture of judgment to those doing small offenses. Discouraging both to feel God is unfair.

When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, he quoted the scripture and he came as an angel of light. When he tries to fool God's people, he is a “wolf in sheep’s clothing”, and his angels are presenting themselves as “servants of righteousness”. (2Co_11:14-15; Mat_7:15)

Satan does not enter a church by quoting himself. He enters the church, quoting God. Twisting his words, using them in the wrong situations. He causes man to sin, so he is less likely to act when others sin, or he exaggerates the punishment, creating rebellion. He carefully studies the situation and deploys the best way to ruin someone using an out of context Bible verse.

The understanding that a punishment should fit the crime to bring about change is seen in the US prison system versus the Norwegian prison system. Here are two different cultures. In the US, prison is often revenging. It is not meant to rehabilitate the criminal, but to satisfy the victims' need to «get even» and physically prevent them from doing it to others. Little care is taken of the criminal, and the result is that they are more likely to repeat their offenses or commit even greater offenses. Small offenders are placed side by side with greater offenders, and the strongest subdue the weak. In numerous instances, there is abuse and torture within the prisons. And thus, the punishment the small offender is suffering is so great compared to the crime that he becomes more rebellious, or hopeless.

Even the biggest offenders have hope of redemption in Norwegian prisons. Although they can end up sitting there their whole lives, even someone with a life sentence is given the hope of release some day if they change their ways and show an understanding of themselves and their crime. In Norway, the focus on rehabilitation is important in the prison. Because believing in them gives them hope, and hope can bring about a change. It also produces less violence in prison. They get to practice working and providing for themselves, even cooking their meals.

Does this work? «In Norway, it has been reported that less than half of people released from prison are rearrested after three years. In Pennsylvania, that figure is closer to 70%.»

(<https://www.freethink.com/society/norway-helped-remake-a-us-prison-heres-what-happened>)

If someone robs a house, and they rightly go to prison, if their experience is too traumatic and harsh, they might go out and do worse harm the next time. It is therefore in people's best interests that offenders get a chance to rehabilitate when they are punished. This is exactly God's design, as we can see in both the law and in the stories in the Bible.

No society is served by having small offenders come out of prison hell to become big or repeat offenders. The Norwegian prison system more closely resembles God's way of dealing with offenders. He punishes, but not so much that all hope is lost. It is seen in His dealings with Israel who sin over and over again. He encourages change and rehabilitation, giving a person hope that they still have a chance of redemption.

Satan wants to take away a sinner's hope. He knows that when hope is gone, it changes men negatively. The despair and the depression cause the sinner to think there is no point in trying to be good anymore, and they are more likely to engage in worse activities or even destroy themselves. Taunting a human with the thought that they are beyond salvation and that God despises them and cannot forgive them. That they cannot change, no matter how hard they try. The moment they believe these lies, Satan has them in his hands. They will destroy themselves and others, and they will leave God.

«For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind»
(2.Tim.1:7)

When that still voice comes and tells you that your sin is too great for God to forgive and that there is no hope for you, you can be sure it is God's enemy talking. God would not taunt the lost, especially someone who is grieved by their action. If they see their sin and are ashamed of it, there is hope. The ones who cannot admit or acknowledge their sin are those who are without hope. If you see your sin and realize it is a sin, it is proof that you are responding to the Holy Spirit, and there is still hope. Jesus saved the criminal that was crucified next to him, and at the very last moment, is a visual message to mankind to never give up on hope and reach out to Him for help.

Paul leaves no doubt that if someone in the church has done something illegal, a grievous sin towards someone else, and it is illegal, then the church should submit to the higher authority, the government, and let them judge and sentence them. Paul even calls the earthly persecutor «the minister of God» when judging the guilty: «For he is the minister of God to thee for good. » (Rom.13:4-5)

It is God's will that there are authorities who can put criminals to court. We are therefore not God's servants if we prevent this and protect the perpetrator who has harmed another human being. Let him receive the punishment for his action, and if repentant, get mercy from God for the life to come. We are not to let offenders go free to offend. Punishment and refusing to forgive are not the same thing. Many times throughout the Bible, we see God punishing and forgiving at the same time. You can love and forgive your son for kicking you in the leg, but at the same time, tell him to go to his room and think about what he has done. It is not revenge; it is giving the child an opportunity to understand himself and his actions. It is not refusing to forgive. In this example, the mother most likely forgives her son for the kick even before he is sent to his room. If the teenage daughter comes home later than agreed upon and apologizes, the punishment is not hate or a lack of forgiveness; it is to teach her to do better.

In churches, it is important for a member not to demand a victim forgive their offender without making sure the offender is held accountable. This does not just have to be larger sins, it can be the seemingly small things that destroy a church: gossip, bullying, petty judgments, favoritism, and exclusion based on selfishness or jealousy.

Satan often feasts on the confusion in the churches. Taking Christ's words out of context has caused many victims additional hurt and fear.

It is hypocrisy and pettiness. Letting the big sinners go free and judging others for small, insufficient things that do not really concern others. Many churches have ended up accepting sins in the church, while at the same time showing no mercy and throwing people out for minor theological disagreements. You can have a rock concert in a church, the pastor cheats on his wife, the worship

leader has a gambling problem, the pianist molests his daughter, the lady in the front row is a notorious gossip and liar, another person practices racism in his neighborhood, and the deacon steals money from his old aunt, and no one does anything about any of it. The poor family lacking food is looked down upon by everyone there, but if you dare have a different understanding of a sentence in the Bible, you are out!

Nowhere does Jesus say we are to kick people out of the church for minor interpretation conflicts.

A church needs to address adultery, sexual immorality, greed, theft, ignoring the poor, and looking away when there is mental and physical abuse among them. And at no point should people's clothing or food, minor issues, or how one word in a biblical text is interpreted be treated as greater offenses.

There were many theological disagreements at the time of the first temple destruction. They had their liberals and their conservatives, like everyone else. Judaism was divided into different groups just like Christians are today, yet despite all of this, we are told repeatedly that the reason God could not protect them and bear over with them anymore was offenses that are no longer considered a big deal by many Christians today:

«Run up and down every street in Jerusalem,” says the LORD. “Look high and low; search throughout the city! If you can find even one just and honest person, I will not destroy the city. But even when they are under oath, saying, ‘As surely as the LORD lives,’ they are still telling lies!”

LORD, you are searching for honesty.» (Jer.5:1-3)

«This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back [my wrath]. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed» (Amos.2: 6-7).

«The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land; the LORD does not see.»(Ezek.9:9)

It is clear from the Bible that we are not to look away and allow evil men to do evil under the misunderstood notion that we are being good Christians.

Nowhere throughout Bible history is God rewarding anyone for injustice or for not interfering when someone is being hurt, oppressed, or damaged.

It is a Christian duty to be brave and act.

“Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins! Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf” (Isaiah 58:1-2).

To leave no room for doubt about who God defends—the victim or the offender—this verse should clear it up: *«The LORD hates these two things: punishing the innocent and letting the guilty go free.» (Pro.17:15)*

The way out of victimhood is not to pretend there are no victims or to convince someone they are not a victim when they are. It is to deal with sin the right way, the way God designed and commanded. Then the victim is empowered and set free.

We cannot preach or force people out of their victimhood, but we can help them through the steps.

Nor as a victim should they do this to themselves. Do not be afraid to ask for justice.

The Good Shepherd

- *In this chapter, we will look at what God's values are, what kind of leader He is.*

In the book of Ezekiel, we learn about how God wants to care for His church. It is a setting where chaos in His congregation has taken over. The leaders no longer reflect God's love for mankind. *«Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?»*

A church and its leadership should be like a hospital for those afflicted by sin.

God's accusation against the unfaithful shepherds are: *«The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.»*

He blames them for only caring about their needs. He says they live off their congregation, they *«clothe you with the wool»*.

Because they did not protect their members, God says: *«And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. »*

The scattering of Christians is painfully true in our day of age. People are running from church to church, from teacher to teacher, from leader to leader, seeking Gods word. Everyone is in disagreement with everyone. And while scattered, the devil has had the opportunity to destroy them. They became «meat to all the beasts».

He also accuses them of not *«searching for»* the afflicted. Not caring what happens to those who live distressed. They aren't concerned about people's fate. They don't seek them or ask for them.

«Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock

...For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep

...I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment» (Ezekiel 34:1-16)

No where do we see God accusing His sheep because they were *«driven away»*, for being *«broken»* or for being *«sick»*. Rather, he says He wants to heal them and care for them.

God is the perfect shepherd and is illustrated as such in both the Old and The New Testaments. Christ told another parable similar to the parable we see in the book of Ezekiel.

«For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

*Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish»
(Matt.18:11-14)*

In the world, our value is tied to our accomplishments and success. With God, our value is that we are His creation, His children that He loves. He understands pain and wounds, and He does not blame us for being hurt, but He wants us to find peace and healing.

The Bible does not teach us to despise weakness but to care for the weak.

«And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ» (1Co 8:11-12)

The heathen world teaches survival of the fittest in every aspect of life. The Bible values the weak and the unsuccessful equally, and asks us to do the same.

“Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and oppressed.” (Psalm 82:3)

It is our carnal hearts that “victim-blame” and despise and fear weakness in others. It is the carnal heart that seeks the popular and the celebrated. Furthermore, it is the carnal heart that seeks to elevate our own worth by mingling with the admired. When our hearts are filled with the Spirit, we will see men as equally worthy. Our time and care are not given just to those whom we wish to gain something from. ([Luke 14:12](#)) Uplifting the broken, opening our home to the forgotten. Sharing our success with those less fortunate. This is Christianity. Every “sheep counts”.

In Christianity, it should not be survival of the fittest, but rather the strong helping the weak on the way forward and the weak blessing the strong. Everyone has something to contribute with, even the despised and rejected. It is our mission as a Christian to seek the potential in all, the worth in all. There is no person we can not learn something from. No interaction we cannot grow from. Usually, it is the interaction with those most different from us, in a different circumstance or who have had a different experience we grow the most from meeting and speaking to. Those who only reflect us, and our lives gives us less personal growth. To grow we need to constantly add information and knowledge not just preserve what we have. Approaching people who are outside our comfort zone can even help us become more confident.

When we see each person’s worth despite their circumstances and struggles, we help Christ in His work. Every individual has value, regardless of what they have been through. If we don’t wish to care for the damaged among us, we resemble the unfaithful shepherds, the unfaithful goats, and the unfaithful servants in all of Christ's stories.

Victimhood as a weapon.

- *Both victims and abusers can use victimhood as a weapon to get their way. How do we avoid using our hurt to manipulate others, and how can we avoid being manipulated by others?*
- How can we tell if someone is pretending to be a victim to manipulate the narrative?

Satan's best tactic for causing hurt and confusion is to turn the roles around. He did it with God, portraying God with his character traits and himself with God's character. Satan claimed to be the defender of individual freedom but suppressed all those who opposed him. God allowed Satan to speak, and Satan silences those who preach Christ. Satan claims God is a dictator, but it is he who acts like a dictator. God has a justice system with thousands upon thousands of witnesses going through all his judgments. Satan works, judges and strikes in the dark.

Satan claimed to be God's victim unjustly. Just because God would not change His law and rule to suit Satan's ambitions, Satan claimed to be treated badly. In the end, all the misery and confusion he created, he blamed God for.

Many people follow Satan's lead in claiming victimhood wrongly. They take away the real victims' right to compensation.

Our built-in desire for justice is so great that when someone says they are a victim and switches roles with the true victim, many will believe them. A real long-term victim will be insecure and struggle to ask for their rights; a false victim is often loud and demanding. It is therefore important to understand the difference between being a victim and claiming victimhood unjustly.

Currently, the world is flooded with people claiming victimhood. Either because of race, gender, sexual preference, or religion.

People are easily offended, and tension is rising all over the world, and especially in the West.

Although both men and women use victimhood as a weapon, women are masters of it. (Isa.3:12) There is perhaps a logic behind it.

A study shows that commonly, the «body strength of women has been reported as being roughly 67% that of men.»

(<https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/brzycki/files/mb-2002-01.pdf>)

Throughout the earth's history, a woman has not stood a chance against a grown man physically. A man would pick up the woman like a woman would a small child.

This has caused women to seek shelter and protection with other men. Causing the effect written about in Genesis. Part of the curse of bringing sin into the world would be her having to choose protection: "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen.3:16)

It being a curse shows there was equality before. If the woman had no enemies, she would not desire a man's protection. The love would be purely love-based. The word "desire" is a word that also means

"longing". The woman will long for the protection she gets from a man. Six thousand years later, in the middle of female empowerment and independence, women still desire romantic stories where the man is strong and protective. Feminists can't seem to beat their instincts and desire for safety from men. Today's technology and world order in part give them this safety, which is in part why it took our age in the world's history for women to seek independence on a greater scale.

A survival show on television led by the famous Bear Grylls placed a group of normal women on one island and a group of normal men on another. They wanted to see how each group worked for their survival in a primitive setting. The women had to be rescued several times by the TV producers, they chose poor solutions and were less resourceful. The men on the other island were thriving, happy, and building structures that helped their survival. It was clear to most of the viewers that men and women do possess different strengths and skills tied to their gender. Although modern feminism refutes this observation, it is refuting the obvious. Denying a fact does not make it any less true.

Primitively speaking, living as the weaker gender has caused some women, knowing they cannot beat a man with physical strength, to find their strength in manipulation instead. If they can control the male, they will have the male's physical strength in their possession.

A man, being the physically stronger gender, has always had to live with the responsibility of being stronger. Being considerate and protective towards the weaker.

The same situation plays out between a woman and a child. If a child gets physical, a woman cannot retaliate physically without it being unfair. The man has that same situation with women. If a woman hits him, he can't hit back because the difference in strength makes the battle unfair.

So, although there are many men who claim victimhood to get ahead, it is more women who do it.

Many have learned to use the skill of manipulation to control their surroundings and make everyone do what they want.

A female manipulator raises her voice to attract attention. A woman who screams is usually considered a victim by default. A female manipulator will pretend to be weak if she wants a man or a system to protect and defend her. Many female psychopaths are known for their tears, and many men still think female tears are evidence of her needing protection. They act on male protective instincts.

Unfortunately, people still have the assumption that if a woman cries, she must be the victim of the situation. Women also do this to other women.

Although it is not the case with all women, women who claim victimhood wrongly are a huge societal problem.

Whoever they hurt or harm, they hurry, taking on the role of a defenseless victim to get protection. The roles are switched, and the victim is considered the perpetrator. A man is often defenseless in such a situation because, being the weaker gender, any doubt usually benefits the woman. Many men have been unrightfully judged because of it.

The whole world paid close attention to a trial between two Hollywood actors. Both claimed to be victims of the other. The trial received a lot of attention because most people have seen how many women win the credibility contest against men just because they are the weaker gender. Because they

cry and are emotional. The hatred the female in this case received was part of a male uprising, men that had been silenced. Thousands of men all over the world told their stories of how they did not stand a chance against a woman's lies because the woman was always believed. Countless stories come from abused men who cannot fight back and must live with a woman being considered their victim. For the first time in the public eye, the female manipulator and all her traits, became obvious to the viewer. And many men, who knew they could never win in their situation, felt a sense of justice when the man in the trial won. This was because this type of situation normally never goes in the man's favor, and if there had not been tape recordings exposing her, it would probably not have gone in this man's favor either. The weight of evidence usually rests on a man when there is an accusation between a couple. In a relationship, a man is often guilty until proven innocent, while a woman is innocent until proven guilty. This is the reality of many men's struggles, and male victims rarely receive kindness.

Although many women manipulate, it is a problem seen among both genders. There are so many that choose, once they have afflicted another harm or manipulation, victimhood, and people are left confused as to who the real victim is. This confusion leads people to be reluctant to take sides, and the real victim is left with the abuser. Or the victim is denied help and sympathy.

Narcissistic people typically afflict harm; when confronted, they hurry and take a victim role until they have received support, and once people withdraw, they are free to continue the abuse. The true victim has learned that speaking up or seeking help will only empower the narcissist and further harm them, and so they remain in their grip in a «learned helplessness» condition.

It is therefore important for Christians who are told to free the oppressed to understand and learn the difference between a real victim and someone using victimhood to control their surroundings.

A real victim can use fear to try to control their surroundings. The fear of abandonment, the fear of not being cared for or heard. However, even if someone is a victim, this is not a healthy way to live or receive attention.

Someone who claims victimhood to get advantages is growing in society. In the US, we see examples of women claiming to have black ancestry when they do not. Women claiming to have Native American ancestry when they do not. Alicia Esteve Head was infamously known for being a 911 survivor, but later it was proven she was not even there when the terror happened. She managed to become president of a large survivor group before everything was exposed. So, with those claiming false heritage, they gained position and power from their claims.

Mostly women have been seen making these victimhood claims to gain something. Desiring the rights and sympathy given to the minority, fighting against a non-existing claim of oppression (in their lives) empowers them. If they are victims, they feel they can control what others say and do.

To explain it simply: victimhood gives power to the manipulator, but victimhood is disempowering for the real victim. It has two different manifestations and results.

Another group constantly claiming victimhood is the LGBTQIA+ community. It is true that they have suffered discrimination in society. But many groups have. Being misgendered is considered a great offense, yet they label other people against their will with no problem. The double standard of this

community is visible to anyone with a sense of justice and logic. Their rights are usually to deprive others of their rights. Their identity wants recognition at the cost of others' identities.

Many in this community are real victims of abuse. But they have taken their unresolved issues, made public false imagery of their traumas, and demanded the world revolve around their needs.

The issue with this community's claimed victimhood is that it is suppressive towards others.

The typical trait of those who use victimhood to control their surroundings.

Therefore, we can see who the weak and broken are that we are to help by how someone expresses their victimhood and their demand. The fruit exposes the tree.

If we side with someone who claims victimhood and uses it to suppress other people's rights, we are not doing God's bidding, even if that person is a victim. We are to help victims heal, not to help them pay their trauma forward or continue the abuse they have suffered upon new victims. We need to know the difference.

If a victim is driven by contempt for others' worth to achieve goals and to control others to go against their conscience, you can be sure it is not your Christian duty to help them.

A real victim can be confused and on the wrong mission. Many victims are genuinely confused. A victim, whether it is real or not, should not control others. A real victim is motivated by fear, and a false victim is motivated by the desire to control others. And both fear and the desire for control can manifest in the same way. Because victimhood is toxic for both the victim and their surroundings, fighting for people's right to remain in victimhood is damaging. This is not kindness, and it is not Christianity. Empowering people in a healthy way is helping them out of victimhood.

We are not to take sides with whoever cries the loudest; not every victim's quest is justified by their being a victim. We are to be fair and fight for what is good.

Everyone knows that many victims become abusers. To be a victim is not to be holy. A victim should not be sided with, no matter what. Many victims are bad people, intentionally and unintentionally.

When a victim does something wrong, it has to be called wrong. When a perpetrator does something right, it is still right. We must never confuse right and wrong. If someone dislikes another, they can usually do nothing right in their eyes. Likewise, when someone loves another, they can do no wrong.

This should not be a Christian way of viewing life and people. A good deed is good, and a bad deed is bad, regardless of who does it. It is the act itself that is either good or bad. The bad person may have bad intentions when doing the good act. But if he feeds someone who is starving, it does not really matter if he is good or bad. The starving being fed is still a good act.

If a good Christian spreads false rumors and ruins someone's reputation, it is not relevant whether he has done many good deeds or held many good sermons. The wrongful act is not made holy because he or she is genuinely a nice person.

By judging this way, justice is blinded and twisted, and people feel they can weigh up their bad deeds with their good deeds. A path that will leave us doomed in the courts of heaven.

Satan uses our faulty understanding to his advantage by having bad people do good things and tempting good people to do bad things. In this way, he can confuse good and bad. He would even assist and make sure that a bad person has money to do good charity if it could cause confusion. Satan blesses pastors and priests who lie and harm, just to cause confusion. Is God blessing evil? Is he siding with those who hurt us? Never, but it can seem that way for many years until real justice comes.

When we do not deal with our sins the right way, it will not work in the long run. We can call good evil and evil good for a while, but time will expose the truth in the end.

God warned: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20.)

There is no blessing in choosing what appears to be the «easy way out». The only way to atone for sin is through the merits of Christ, through the heavenly priestly sanctuary system. Sin must be admitted, addressed, and called by its right name. There is no «jumping the fence» to get a free pass.

We need to humble ourselves to be lifted.

In society today, many parents are failing their children because of a constant pursuit of career, money, and new love affairs. When a natural abandonment response is seen in the child, they try to diagnose their child with a behavior problem instead of addressing their selfishness. A selfish parent would rather have a diagnosis that stigmatizes their child, then admit their fault or allow abuse to become known.

It has become almost an epidemic in the west that neglected, and abused children are viewed as mentally ill. Even in nuclear families, victim roles are switched. In all parts of society, we see people not taking accountability and instead blaming the victim or switching roles.

Satan is ruining families, and he is ruining children.

People cannot seem to handle guilt in a healthy way anymore, which is why assuming victimhood has become so popular. A real victim is suppressed by victimhood and desires freedom for themselves; a manufactured victim uses victimhood to suppress and control others.

Learning the difference is essential to helping the real victims, and there are a growing number of them.

A good understanding of these things can liberate the real oppressed. To help them differentiate, to know their worth, and to help them understand God is not behind any of the wrongful acts committed against them.

The Victorious Christian

- *A Christian is supposed to be free. How can a victim break free from suppression and have a healthy relationship with God? What is the result of following Christ's advice?*
- *Step-by-step guide to making a change and training mind and body for a life in freedom*

When someone gets stuck in victimhood, they are dependent either way. Either it is the subdued victimhood, where the victim has a constant trauma response to their surroundings, or it is the claimed victimhood, which is trying to manipulate, suppress, and control the surroundings. Lastly, even real victims become perpetrators, using their past to achieve their desires. All three of these responses to victimhood take away someone's true self. It forces them to walk in circles. They are not emotionally independent and depend on others' responses to them to feel good.

The Christian freedom is to not live «by flesh» but by the Spirit. This concept of flesh versus spirit is mostly used to explain how to get freedom from our sins. However, there is more to it than just sin. If we are trapped in a cycle where we keep repeating acts we know are wrong but don't have the power to stop, the Bible tells us to live by the Spirit instead.

Meaning to ignore or not listen to our feelings and needs if they are mistaken or wrong. A Christian is not to be controlled by emotions and lust alone but by intellect and love. Not the love of the world, but God's love. God's love is not selfish or self-indulgent; it always considers the greater good.

Jesus said: *«Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light» (Matt.11:29)*

This statement has puzzled many, as the Christian life is full of difficulties—even Christ's life was, and so how can His yoke be easy?

Every act done towards Christ, whether it was disbelief from his family, rejection by society, accusations of being something he was not, or other attacks, changed Christ's personality or character. It is here that a victim's downfall begins. It is also the major reason a Christian should not take upon themselves the identity of victimhood. When our character and values are changed by our surroundings, we become trapped and are not free. God said, “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted” (Isa.54:11)

Jesus stood firm in the middle of abuse. Someone else's anger afflicted him, but it did not force His anger. Rather, Christ was always in complete control of who He was, at all times.

When He was bullied and abused, He refused to let it change Him. Instead, he held the bully accountable. That does not mean He was not hurt, it just mean He did not let the hurt change His values.

When we as Christians can be easily controlled by emotions stirred up by others, then they partly control our path in life. Who would want their enemies or haters to decide who they are and will be? Yet, victims may give their perpetrator this power, often unknowingly. If we get angry at others when others are angry with us, distrustful when others are distrustful of us, jealous if others are jealous of us, and so on, we reflect the sin committed rather than conquering it. We mirror sin.

The idea that our anger is justified by someone else's traps us into a state where we think we are free when we really are not. An emotional outburst can feel liberating, but it is not necessarily so.

You can picture a mirror: a reflection copies the other but remains a reflection of it.

Christ's advice to meet evil with good, pray for the one who curses us, and be generous to the thief is not suggesting we become subdued or conquered. It is actually the opposite. Christ is telling us to not let others' bad behavior change who we are or who we want to be. If someone witnesses something false about us, we can show that person that they do not get to inspire us to become like them. The biggest power move is to make sure they hear you speaking nicely behind their backs. When you do not choose a revenge response, the shame they try to put on you you reject, and the shame goes right back to them. For if you speak kindly of the one who speaks badly of you, they will end up with the shame they tried to impute upon you.

Christ's advice is not meant to make a Christian pitiful and pathetic; it is meant to make them strong. God's desire to impute His character into the Christian's heart is constantly challenged by Christians reflecting their surroundings instead. He tells us to be changed by beholding Him, not our abusers and mockers.

Every wrongful act has a consequence, or chain reaction. When a Christian refuses to change when confronted with others' bad behavior, they stop the chain of sin from continuing onward. They become pillars of light for good. When one piece of the domino toppling is removed, it stops the continuation of pieces falling.

«The eye for an eye» law in the Bible is important for justice and is still in force to combat crime, but it does not always give men the peace they desire.

A victim of a wrongful act can see their perpetrator go behind bars and still, for years to come, not have peace. Every day, they act out some response to the evil they suffered.

While the God of the Bible constantly shows sympathy and love to those afflicted and weak, He does not want them to stay subdued because of their affliction.

Christ's advice to not let others' evil control you is not Him closing the eyes to the hurt others cause as if it had never happened. Rather, His words are part of setting the victim free.

I have met and spoken to so many Christians who are obsessed with some wrong done to them and who hunger for justice to take place. It consumes them and changes them, yet in it, they measure their «goodness» by the others' «evil». This is a good way of fooling ourselves. We don't become good because someone does something bad to us. We cannot evaluate our position with God based on someone else's rebellion. Some, by beholding the injustice they have suffered, become almost possessed by it. It takes up their hearts and minds, and before they know it, it has changed them.

Christ acknowledges that we will get hurt in this world, but He shows us how to not let that hurt change us to reflect the same spirit.

His gift of His Spirit, a Spirit harmonizing with God's standards, is to be listened to before “our flesh”. “Our flesh” brings us into captivity. It acts on instinct, and it never sees the whole picture.

If we become irritable around someone who is irritable, charitable around someone charitable, open-minded around an open-minded person, closed-minded around a close-minded person, and so on, we are still living by “the flesh”. Living by “the flesh” is not just about private sin; it is also about how we respond to our surroundings.

Most humans are controlled by their surroundings in what they think, eat, feel, and do. It is normal to seek confirmation and approval to gain confidence. Approval from the world around us is given when we reflect the world's image. Men and women approve of their reflections.

Yet, despite this, a Christian is given a higher calling. To reflect Christ and not the world around us. To look for God's approval and not mankind's. This makes the Christians who do this a natural threat to their surroundings. Mankind finds security and peace in mirroring each other. When someone suddenly does not respond and mirror them as they wish, or they are not able or want to reflect you, they become insecure, and their peace is broken. The Christian is given the blame for this broken peace, is considered a disruption, and is treated as such. This is why Christians who reflect the world are accepted, while Christians who try to reflect Christ are mostly rejected. Worldly hearts find those who reflect Christ suspicious, uncontrollable, and strange. And so they despise or dislike Christians.

Jesus said: *«If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me»
(Joh 15:18-21)

Jesus said His yoke was easy, but He did not have an easy life. The same way it will be for a Christian who reflects Him. Peace and freedom lie in whom you choose to be, uncontrolled by the world and its sins.

Jesus says their rejection comes from «not knowing God». Man's insecurity and need for control make him fight against someone he does not understand and perceive that person as a threat.

When a Christian chooses a different response than that of “the flesh” to others, it is not always understood and therefore not appreciated.

What would have happened to Jesus if, instead of doing His calling, He argued with his brothers, trying to get them to approve of Him before He could find His peace? What would have happened if Christ had decided to use His life to get the pharisees and scribes approval, to force them to accept Him by using all His energy on it? Or if he had been moved by revenge when they mocked Him on the cross and said that if He freed Himself, they would believe Him? How different the story of Jesus would have been if He had been obsessed with everyone who wronged Him and wanted to «set them straight»?

When the pharisees and scribes tried to tempt him, to start a fight, Jesus often changed the subject. Not because He could not win an argument, but because He would not engage in their role play.

All sins in the world, all sinners, are acting out a response to sin with their sin. Everything is caused by a chain effect. Even the worst killer sitting in prison is the result of some chain effect, and he leaves behind a chain effect.

Christ offers us the chance to break the chain with His help. To be the people who stop the flow of all the little evils in society. The more Christians there are to stop it, the more society will benefit from it. This blessing is not given when Christians, instead of reflecting Christ, start reflecting their surroundings instead. Then they become part of the chain and part of the problem. We respond to everything happening around us «with the flesh» rather «with the spirit».

Trauma response: living “by the flesh”?

To sin is to indulge in destructive behavior, whether it is self-destructive or destructive to others. It is bodily lust over love and care for others.

Many don't realize that trauma response is also living by the flesh. It is also a selfish way to respond to the surroundings and to what happened to us, and a self-destructive way to live. Fear is always self-defensive. Fear puts self-interest first.

We give innocent people distrust because another has failed us.

We give innocent people our anger and hurt because someone else has hurt us.

A man disrespected by his boss should not go home and take it out on his kids. This is how sin tends to grow until all of society is wounded and stressed.

Although God wants us to care for the weak and the wounded, He does not wish for the wounded to stay in a passive state.

It is like aiding a society that has famine the wrong way. You can bring them food and end their immediate hunger, but eventually, their food supply will be dependent on you unless they are taught and provided the opportunity to help themselves. Kindness ends when you create codependency. The recipient of this type of kindness will be wounded in the long term.

Any person who is not believed in, has not learned to take responsibility, or has not learned to master a craft will feel low self-worth and lose their self-esteem.

So, in this example, if you keep feeding them with bread, you have, in fact, silenced their hunger but ruined their strength, talents, and self-esteem.

The best way to help the less fortunate is to assist in their immediate need, then use the means to help them get independence. Once they believe in themselves and master life, they will feed themselves.

You will no longer be needed and can help someone else. As Christians, we are not to create codependency, but to lift people up to be achievers. Any Christian helping by creating co-dependency is only thinking of themselves, even when doing charity.

In this example, the best way is not to feed them and leave them, or to feed them forever, but to feed them and then give them the tools and opportunity to feed themselves.

This has to be how God helps mankind as well. He can't do everything for us, make all decisions for us, or protect us from all consequences. If He does, we do not grow or develop healthily.

It is the same way with people who have suffered injustice and trauma. The Bible is clear that we are responsible for helping those in need and showing compassion and kindness. Yet, the Bible also encourages them and us to help them become dependent, confident, and strong. After showing kindness, we need to find the right tools to rebuild them and free them from what holds them down. Not just «nice words», but practical help.

If one woman is very depressed and another would instead of saying "be positive» or «pull yourself together», takes off her means and uses it to pay for an activity that will help her learn a new skill, so she can learn that she can do more than she thinks she can, it would be better help. A mentally stuck person needs to experience that the world is bigger, and her or his abilities are wider, than she or he thinks. With this, she could view everything, including the things holding her or him down, in a less impossible way. Helping someone discover how they can overcome a minor challenge can give them tools to deal with their seemingly impossible challenges. You help them believe in themselves. Depending on the damage behind a person's issues, repeated help or finding new alternatives to help is important. Every so often a diversion is needed for someone to «snap out» of a bad cycle. But telling someone to just «think differently», without offering some kind of practical help to do so is just adding harm to the harm. The body acts on instincts, often independent of thoughts, which is why "good thoughts" can't always heal people from negative patterns.

We understand this when a village is starving, or someone is sick and needs a doctor, but we seem not to understand it when it comes to mental health issues. We hammer the wounded with words that do not help them out of the darkness they are in. For a Christian, it hardly helps to tell someone «Jesus loves you» if that person does not feel worthy of that love. How will they receive the truth if it is not emotionally understood?

I know someone who believed in God for years but never became a Christian for the very reason she did not know how to receive love. She had not been loved growing up by her parents; she had been denied compassion, her needs had always been ignored, and she had been taught not to ask for anything and not to expect anything. With what was supposed to be love came something bad.

When she heard about God's love, it had no effect on her or changed her. It was just words. When she later had experiences of God saving and helping her directly, following the practical example of good Christians, she started understanding love and her value. In the end, she was able to receive Christ. Others with good parental role models, who have been treated as valued members in their family, when hearing «Jesus loves you» they have a good reference to what that means. The understanding of love is often tied to experience. Where there is no experience, there is no understanding.

In some trauma cases, "Jesus loves you" must be given with practical illustrations and new experiences. In both instances, the one who is loved and the one who is not, practical experience is needed to give meaning to the words. Some get that practiced when they are growing up, and others do not.

A Christian must never think that words without additional practical experience are enough. Christ is the "truth," and He is the word come to life. The truth, the way, and the life are therefore words that come to life and are practiced.

This is in part why God needs a Christian to be a good example, a good ambassador for Him, and to reflect God's love to others. This is why "the word" became "flesh" and lived among us (Joh.1,1) For mankind to comprehend God's love and truth correctly, words were not enough, so Christ came to us as a practical living fulfillment of the word. Neither can we share God's word with others without practicing it. Without God's practical manifestation of His word, people are lost. God's love, in the Bible, is always reflected through actions. (Jas 2:14-26; Heb.11)

In the Old Testament, God repeatedly told His people to care for and help others. To be kind to strangers and the fatherless. To help the poor and to free those who are suppressed. Through these

practical actions, they were to heal society and bring people to God, so He could restore them «in His image» and free them from the oppression of sin.

Yet, God's people failed repeatedly and focused on God's demands and laws without the practical example to put them in the right light, which became their downfall. It is impossible to keep God's law correctly without the manifestation of love. Words can't do anything alone, the living spirit of them brings life.

Even Christ, whose words were perfect, did not attempt to teach people about God's love without putting it into practice. He cared for the poor, the weak, the rejected, the hated, and the sick.

In the story of Zacchaeus, a rich man who had taken financial advantage of others but secretly regretted his behavior, Jesus did not stop to ask him to change. Rather, Jesus, in front of everyone who hated Zacchaeus, asked to come into his home. Most would be ashamed to be seen with Zacchaeus, but Christ showed him love in the open. By his action, Christ showed others, including Zacchaeus, the worth each man has in His eyes. When at Zacchaeus' home, without being told, Zacchaeus promised to give back what he had stolen and help the poor. Zacchaeus did not just change because of what Jesus said, but because of what Jesus did. He also understood that he needed to show people with his actions that he really regretted what he had done to make an impact. First, Jesus was discriminated against for entering Zacchaeus house, but later they would see that Jesus going home with Zacchaeus did not make Jesus reflect Zacchaeus. Rather, it made Zacchaeus change to be more like Christ.

This is the power of any Christian who lives by the spirit and not by the flesh. To follow the principles of Christ rather than mirroring sinful behavior or letting it control us. Christ chose closeness to a sinner, but it changed the sinner, it did not change Him. This strength is offered to all Christians, regardless of their background, whether we are victims or not.

When we let others' sin change us and how we treat others, we are still living in the flesh. While we do this, we cannot properly preach Christ or reflect Him.

Since victimhood is also living by the flesh and letting fear, anger, and trauma control us and how we treat others, how do we practically escape it?

The following are some important things to consider:

1. Look for recognition from God rather than men. The desperate need for recognition and acceptance from other people ruins us and our self-esteem. It changes our morals and principles to match those of those around us. Because we often chase recognition from those who ignore us or will not give it to us—those who do not care for us—we end up mirroring the wrong people. By finding peace with God's acceptance, we can avoid allowing our need for approval to control our interaction with others.

2. Trust in God's justice and that God will revenge or chasten those who harmed us if they don't confess, repent, and compensate.

A lot of the time, we don't see justice; we do not get recognition as either victims or as someone who is "worth more than what happened to us". This can drive anyone insane and consume them. Some victims have to endure seeing those who treated them badly accepted in society and themselves

rejected. By knowing and believing there is a higher power who sees everything and whose angels carefully observe any injustice, we know they will have to pay at some point. We can leave the vengeance to God because carrying it ourselves will only consume and destroy us. Leave the judgment to God; we don't have to take the law into our hands and waste our whole lives and energy seeking justice. There is a heavenly court that will handle those who do not repent or stop harming others. We can even choose to feel sorry for those who do not repent, knowing they will one day stand guilty before God without atonement to offer, then die their final death and be no more. Pray for them and consider the danger they are in because of their decisions. (Mat 5:44) Following Christ's advice does not make you weak; it makes you strong. By praying for your enemy, you get help to focus blame where it should be, so you yourself can find freedom. Even when we forgive, we find freedom for ourselves. People who do not easily condemn others are less likely to get stuck easily condemning themselves. Leave it to God; walk free.

3. Trust God to protect you. The peace this trust gives helps against the unbalanced fear response. Trust that you are safe with Him.

Fear is a defense mechanism that is meant to save us from immediate danger. When fear becomes a chronic response to everything, we are suppressed by it. It is not possible to be selfless in the middle of a fear response. It creates a lot of misery. Fear and love rarely go together. Fear is self-absorbed. Fear discriminates; it is biased, and it is violent. It drives people away from each other and leads them to treat each other with suspicion. Fear is close-minded.

Trusting that you have a higher power there to protect you and help you through your challenges can battle that fear. Knowing God is ready to help you when you call on Him can help you live more open-mindedly and meet people as they deserve, even if they don't deserve it.

Many Christians live by fear, and when they do, they do not represent Christ as trustworthy to others. They may say it, but their actions speak against their words. A Christian needs to trust God themselves to reflect God's love to others and to themselves. Living by fear is also living "by the flesh".

4. Receive God's spirit. The degenerated man, destroyed by the chains of sin on them, around them, and throughout generations, cannot implement in themselves the ability to defy their bodily reactions to things that happen.

The Bible is clear that because sin has such dominance in the world, a Christian needs power, or a strength imputed, that can help us live as we want rather than as our bodily instincts tell us to. If we ask God to help us, we don't have to lose our temper when someone insults us. The love the spirit imputes in our hearts, even for an enemy, will change our immediate reaction and will restrain us from harming the other or losing patience. Love is powerful. It keeps a good parent's behavior under control, even when their toddlers are acting out and punching them. They do not retaliate or desire revenge on their child. When this kind of love is imputed to us by the Spirit for others, both known and unknown, it changes our responses and gives us a natural patience and kindness, even in a distressful situation. Our love will stretch beyond the boundaries of our home. (Mat 5:46-48) When Jesus said his burden was easy, in part, this is what He meant. It's easier for our mental and physical health to love than to hate.

Many religious people seek spiritual power to overcome negative or harmful emotional reactions. Buddhist monks show great restraint and deny themselves. Many people, in different religions, understand that denying oneself constant emotional needs gives power to the mind. But in almost all cases, they isolate themselves or harm themselves in the process. Many Christians who choose to combat “self” in this way also isolate and harm themselves. The need to control the surroundings to control the “inside” shows that although people can deny their needs and feelings and control their actions, their lives become a constant struggle. The mind and the body are in conflict, as Paul describes in his letter to the Romans (Rom.7 & 8). Our desire for justice can awaken the wrong reactions within us.

Contrary to the normal religious notion, God's solution is not to change the "outside," but to impute something strong on the inside. With it, you can be who you are and do the right thing without having to isolate yourself.

When the Spirit of God is invited to give us inner strength, it will win over “the flesh” every time.

Our out-of-control emotions lose their strength and are replaced by good instincts.

Some with a non-Biblical view find this ideology suppressive. Suppressing “natural” instincts is bad for people. The truth is that most of the time, when men and women act on instinct, whether it is anger, sexual desires, hurtful words, or other impulses, they regret it. And regret is a strong, stressful, negative emotion that wears us down. Getting help to do the right thing, so we don't have to live with the consequences of an impulsive decision, is a healthier way to live. It brings less stress into our lives and helps us with self-love and confidence.

Many people who have converted to Christianity and received the spirit experience a change in their desires. Their hearts are attracted to and more in line with the Spirit and Christ. This inside change cannot be scientifically explained. Jesus compared it to “the wind”. (John 3) You cannot see it, but it is there, and you know because of the work it does. You see it changing the person who receives it. It changes our instincts.

Many non-Christians think that most Christians are constantly combating temptations they themselves give into, and they can't imagine having to become a Christian and constantly denying themselves. Many Christians do have a fake conversion. But a real one, where the Spirit has been imparted, temptations are weakened, and wants and desires do change.

The converted will not feel the same way about the same temptations as they did before they were converted. The unbeliever therefore does not understand the believer and what the driving force behind them is. To add to that, the power of conversion also lies in the great hope, love, and inspiration the Christian experiences, which also empowers them and makes them feel less helpless. If you are happy and at peace, it is easier to be good and do good. The Christian faith therefore gives many renewed strengths.

Perhaps it can be compared to a man and a woman falling in love. When the love is at its strongest between them, they become more alike and change without realizing it, becoming more at one with each other. All they want is to be together as much as possible. Everything they experience is better with the other person there, or they feel hollow. It is a similar love that pulls a Christian towards Christ and change.

5. Don't fear change

Christ is not a still standing destination, He is a destination that is always on the move. Everything in the universe is constantly moving. The earth is spinning around itself, but also around the sun, and the solar system moves in the galaxy, and the galaxy moves within the universe. In God's universe, things move and connect. A Christian who thinks their journey ends at the cross will eventually end up “living by the flesh”.

If you wish to find clean water, you must look for running water. Water must be in motion in some way to be fit for consumption.

Everything good is in motion. God's people need to be in motion. An individual who does not progress will self-destruct.

To be free from whatever holds us down or captivates us, we need to see change as the door to our freedom and not a door to destruction.

A Christian should always want to progress, learn more, and continue the journey they started.

Someone who is stuck in a trauma response, or is controlled in some way and needs freedom, must view change differently than they have.

Many fear change. Long term afflicted people will often fear change because they are scared the change will be worse than what they are now coping with.

Many abused people do not leave their abuser in fear that the world out there will harm them more. Although they have it bad, they still manage to fear the unknown more.

Those who break free from abuse usually end up saying death is better than their current situation, and at that moment they take control because the worst thing they have feared is now looking like a better option. It is sad when it must come to that. The fear of the unknown holds us in abusive relationships. Some Christians are stuck in sects, having been taught God will leave them if they go. Usually, they have to accept the idea of possible eternal damnation to set themselves free. The amount of desperation involved in making such a decision is not to be underestimated.

Some know they will lose their job, their family, and their position in life if they want to free themselves from the suppression they are in.

Change can be hard, but it is the only way to be liberated from a suppressive relationship or situation.

For trauma survivors, daring to seek change will slowly get them out of their trauma response.

Many long-term trauma survivors fear changes because they have no self-confidence that they can handle what will come their way, and they have lost trust in God to help them. If you are such a person or know such a person, practically helping them regain self-confidence and trust in themselves and their worth—trust in God—must be considered the best way to help them. Starting with simple challenges and then building up to bigger challenges might be the best solution.

Conquering one small fear is training to conquer a bigger one.

For instance, if someone is afraid to choose a path of change to save themselves from trauma-response behavior or abuse, find something smaller they fear they can conquer first. As an example, if they fear heights, this can be used as a tool to help them. First, climb a small rock. Find heights that are safe and secure. Teach them that their feelings can't always be trusted after trauma and abuse. Do it repeatedly until they feel in control at that height. Then choose a little higher spot, and then continue until they feel in control and less scared in those situations. This little practical training will help the individual learn to trust their abilities to discern and make decisions instead of being a slave to the fear response.

When what they feared did not happen in the small things, it will give them hope that can be employed in other things they fear. This can be done with many things and in many ways. It is reprogramming the brain and giving the power back to the victim.

If someone is too scared to seek the change that is for their own good, don't just give up on them.

A baby does not go from lying on its back to running. It goes through stages. First it learns to turn around, then it pushes its upper body up, then it crawls, and then it learns to stand. And once it feels confident in leading its body, it dares to take the first steps. And once they feel confident in their walking and their steps are stable, they start running and jumping. Some kids are brave and skip steps, but still, it is a step-by-step process. If we tried to force a baby that had never stood on its own two feet to run, it would get damaged emotionally and physically. It might also fear the very thing we wanted to teach them, and rightly so, as it hurts them.

This is how it is when we are trying to help ourselves and others make a change. The goal cannot be demanded or expected immediately; if it is, it might cause even more fear and phobia. We think we helped them achieve their goal, but in reality, we pushed the goal further away.

If we fear a change we need, and if others fear a change they need, we must help ourselves and them by pointing out the first step and encouraging them to conquer the first challenge on the path forward.

For many who are stuck, self-esteem is the first challenge that needs to be trained; without it, the goal can never be obtained.

Many think self-esteem is not Christian because it is confused with pride. Pride and self-esteem are not the same thing. Self-esteem is a good force when practiced in love. This principle is apparent when we see that those with the highest self-esteem are not those who bully and control others. Bullies are usually the ones with the lowest self-esteem. When you have good self-esteem, you become self-efficient; you do not need to control others to feel safe. You don't need to put others down, compete with others, or use others to feel valuable. A person with true self-esteem is a problem solver, and they can push their bodies to the extreme. A person with self-esteem will not be so easily pushed from side to side by their surroundings. They do not change with every "wind" (Jam.1:6). Their faith in God is not easily destroyed.

The moment a broken human being learns to trust themselves and God, they can get the tools needed to break free from whatever is holding them down. And if they do not wish to break free for the sake of others, they can remain true to themselves and God in the situation they are in.

Pride is selfish and patronizing. A proud person looks down on others. Pride treats others badly. Pride is threatened by any interference with their thought pattern. It feeds on being better or superior to others. Pride demands acceptance instead of asking for it. Therefore, pride and self-esteem are not the same. A person with self-esteem wishes for others to have it too because they are not threatened by others' strength and success. True self-esteem is not competitive; self-esteem can also be the opposite of jealousy. Any form of self-esteem that is built upon others' failures is not true self-esteem.

God wants us to have self-esteem and thrive.

Worldly self-esteem will last shortly and is not dependent on our worth in God's eyes but on our position in society.

Godly self-esteem is not achieved by suppressing others or controlling others; it is trained by challenging and controlling ourselves.

If we fall, we take God's hand and pull ourselves up. It is believing that we have worth and that we can improve anything we work on.

Many who were subjected to abuse as children have been taught co-dependency. They have been brainwashed and traumatized into thinking they are too weak, too helpless, and too stupid to do anything right. Let alone free themselves and be independent without their abuser. In such cases, the self-esteem they need to have as adults is ruined. This is why they need to learn how to develop this inner tool. It cannot be handed to them with pretty words or a pat on the back. You do not help them by practicing self-esteem on their behalf, for then you just continue a cycle of co-dependency.

Rather, you must give them the opportunity for practical and physical training. Any child growing up with healthy self-esteem subconsciously develops it over many years and through many exercises. A teenager or a grown person will need just as much time to develop after it has been systematically broken down. A healthy child does not even have the disadvantage of trauma when learning. A grown person has the disadvantage of being broken down or learning the wrong things, and then having to build themselves up from that unfortunate start point. Naturally, it might take time, patience, and more than one opportunity to train. Repetition is the key to making any change. If we want to memorize something, we need to read it over and over. We have to train our brain to memorize, or it will be forgotten easily.

Likewise, if we want to change a negative pattern, we too have to repeat the new pattern over and over again until the brain learns to think and react differently. As an example, if you fear heights, choose one specific place that brings out that fear. Keep going there often. Sit there for a longer and longer period of time. Sit closer and closer. Slowly, you will notice the body being less alert and less stressed, and the brain will have a different reaction to the view. If you go there only once or twice too close to the edge and then run in fear, you have strengthened your phobia instead and will likely fear heights even more after. Repetition and gradations of challenge are the only ways to change a mental pattern. Eye the healthy change and start facing it slowly and repeatedly until the brain starts changing its reactions and instincts.

Why can't God create that change in our minds when we come to Him? He can, and occasionally, he will if there is no other way. But there is a reason He wants us to do it ourselves.

God wants to help anyone who comes to Him, but He does not wish to "take over" their or our lives. God wants His children to succeed, grow, and prosper. He cannot help anyone do this by doing everything for them, removing every challenge and every obstacle, and only saying the things they want to hear. So, God allows mankind to face challenges, so they can become stronger and be a good force in the world.

Physical and mental strength work similarly. To make a muscle stronger, you need to use it repeatedly. The more you add challenges to the muscle and repeat, the stronger it gets. It is the same way with mental strength, if done properly. Practicing ourselves helps build healthy self-esteem, which helps someone manage their life in a good way.

We seek change to grow. We challenge ourselves to become stronger.

Fearing change only harms us. If we desire a change in our lives, and it seems impossible to achieve it, start with changing the little things first. Let the goal hang out there in the distance first. Train your self-esteem, learn to trust that God is wishing you well, and then start walking forward.

The worst self-esteem a Christian can have, and that is bad for their spiritual life, is the self-confidence that we do not need God in our lives and that we can atone for our sin. This is a different situation. God wants to guide and help us, but if He does not let us practice our mind and body ourselves, He creates codependency, and we will become unhappy. The whole point of training is to help us be happy and feel like we are needed and wanted. If God does it all for us, this will not be the result. We will fear God, not love him. Being idle and helpless has never brought happiness to anyone.

When Moses lost his confidence, God still found a way to use him and help him regain it for the greater good. At first, Moses had Aron speak on his behalf. He let Aron throw the staff that turned into a serpent, even though God had taught him how to do it. For a while, Aaron kept speaking on Moses' behalf, but after a while, Moses became braver and more confident enough to speak directly to both the people and the pharaoh. You could say Moses showed a little lack of faith to begin with, but God was patient with him and let him have the time and help he needed to reach his full potential. From being scared and letting his brother speak on his behalf to becoming one of the greatest biblical leaders and speakers in history, it has been quite the journey. Everyone has a journey. We just need to keep moving forward.

6. Practice your faith

It is nothing but self-deception to think that we can believe in something without acting on that belief. If we don't think we can succeed at something, we won't try to either. If we think we can do something, we will try. Our actions tell us what we really believe about ourselves, others, and God.

In society and our day, people often say what they wish is true or what they would like to be true, thinking it somehow becomes true.

What we do shows our belief, or lack of it. If we want to move forward, we have to take physical steps. Like James said: *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works"* (James 2:18)

What you do with "your hand" strengthens "your mind". If you choose to do what is wrong, it will, after a while, change how you think and reason. The "hand" (our actions) and "the mind" (our thoughts and decisions) are connected. It is the same way with that which is good. If you choose to act on what is right, it will help strengthen your mind. Paul describes in the book of Hebrew many God-fearing heroes acting upon their faith. (Heb.11) For a long-time, deceitful preachers have taught their congregation that God only asks of us a conversion of the mind. But in the Bible, what we do will affect our minds either negatively or positively. Acting out our faith establishes our faith in our hearts and minds. Those who only believe with "their mind" will fall away from the faith at some point. These are the laws of God's creation.

To make a simple illustration. If you say with your mind that you want healthy vegetables but then eat candy, your mind, and body know you did not get healthy vegetables. You can tell your body the candy you ate is healthy, but the body will still treat it as unhealthy. We cannot fool ourselves with words. For someone who needs to get out of victimhood or trauma response, understanding this is critical. You can't wish for and desire freedom while at the same time doing the things that imprison you. Don't be stuck in your head. You have power in "the hand" and every so often the "hand" needs to teach the brain, and other times the brain needs to teach "the hand".

Make sure to act toward your goal instead of just thinking about it. Take one step at a time. Ask for help if you need it. Take a big step if that is the right step. Just take a step forward. Say it, then work towards it or do it, and then the word will be established.

7. Don't give the responsibility for your healing to others.

It can be important for many to get help in the healing process, but do not give away your responsibility. It is understandable that many dread responsibilities, especially if they lack self-esteem, but taking the responsibility also means taking control of the solution.

If we practice "learned helplessness" when working on our healing, we will never find it.

When someone has been hurt, neglected, or wounded in some way, they desperately want to see a change with the person who harmed them to find their peace. If we are dependent upon that to find peace, then we will only have it if they repent. Which they might not at all. We then leave our healing in the hands of our perpetrators.

It is not the best approach to make ourselves dependent upon those who hurt us to find our freedom.

We wishfully want to change ourselves by changing others' responses to us. So instead of finding healing, we will "beat our heads against a wall", trying to change others to feel better ourselves. What self-destructing self-deception it is, when we think that changing others will somehow change us! It's never worked, but people keep trying to make it happen that way, always failing.

To find true peace, we should seek the change we need in ourselves, no matter the surroundings. As Christians, we can find communion with Christ, and let that inspire us instead.

On this earth, our surroundings, and the people we will meet will never be perfect. If you are dependent on people having the perfect response to you, then making the perfect decision to be able to do the right things yourself, you set yourself up for failure.

Accept that life is unfair, some people are heartless, some people won't repent, some won't understand you, some people will not care, no matter how much you want them to.

If you have the idea that you must convince those around you to change to find your change or relief, give it up right now.

You can do the right thing even if others do not. Don't let your healing and health depend on people who hurt you. Take responsibility for your healing.

Be who you want to be without waiting for your surroundings to change. If you want others to change, inspire them with your change, but you have to change first to do that.

As bad as it sounds, do not give the sole responsibility for your healing to God either. He wants to help you, but He cannot act on your behalf, as little as you pushing weights is going to give another person bigger muscle mass. You need to participate and take responsibility for your healing. God will be right there by your side and help you, but you have the responsibility to make the decision.

6. Don't punish yourself.

A house in conflict with itself cannot stand. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt.12:25)

Someone who is abused often punishes themselves. If we are against ourselves, our «house» cannot stand. The worst enemy we ever face is ourselves. Abused and harmed people have not been taught to

love themselves, and so they find temporary relief in bullying themselves. It might seem strange to someone with a healthy upbringing and mind, but those who have not had that privilege understand this concept very well.

Many people who grow up in unloving homes and have suffered neglect, bullying, and abuse can, as teenagers and adults, self-harm by cutting themselves, punishing themselves, and verbally mocking and speaking down upon themselves. Within that group of victims, many start abusing drugs, as it partially relieves them of their need to harm themselves. It is still another form of self-abuse, even if the drug user considers it to be self-medication.

Self-aggression is a way to take control over one's own pain. It is the reason many victims become abusers as well. By switching roles and becoming the abuser, they manage, in a heartless way, to detach themselves from the fear and vulnerability of being a victim. The person who self-abuses finds relief similarly, but instead of finding a victim, they become both the abuser and the victim. They take on both roles; this too gives a sense of control and identity. Self-abuse often happens when a person feels they have embarrassed themselves or done something stupid. It could also be that they feel rejected or ignored by someone. Wanting to feel «good» again and «helpless» so they don't have to feel responsible for their behavior, they bring out the «abuser» role to create the «victim role» and thereby find balance and temporary relief. The problem is that if, when you grow up, you don't have good lessons on how to healthily deal with problems, you are inclined to deal with them unhealthily. Our bodies can't be tricked. We were not created for a world of sin, but our bodies have adjusted. It demands relief when hurt. So, adults, children, and teenagers find many ways to relieve the pressure that lies upon them. If we do not receive the right guidance early on, we will use the wrong methods. Not only people with multiple personality disorders divide themselves into different roles. It is very normal for a self-abuser to do the same when they become both the abuser and the victim and role-play it repeatedly.

Self-harm and self-hate are ways to dissociate from the real issue. It can give momentary relief because the person who does it feels in control and gets adrenalin, and those two things help them get back up and go on with their daily lives. But they will never truly be happy because they live in an abusive relationship with themselves. The problem is momentarily relieved, but not solved. The person who self-harms continues doing so repeatedly because it is not a solution in itself. Rather, they are stuck in a cycle that is very hard to break free from. It becomes an addiction because it gives off hormones and a false sense of calm afterward.

Unfortunately, some thrive in the abuser role even though the only person they are abusing is themselves. It makes them feel strong enough to handle life's challenges.

For a mentally healthy individual, this might not make sense, but it is very common.

To get out of this self-destructive cycle, we need to find self-love and self-care. To forgive ourselves when we have done something wrong. For those who have never experienced parental love, this is very hard. For a Christian, however, this love can be experienced through God as a father. If we are willing to see the great value we hold in His eyes, His willingness to forgive and heal our wounds, it can inspire us to deal with ourselves in a better way too.

Rather than finding relief in reenacting the abuser-abused role to deal with momentary pain, we can find relief with God. He can be the strong one who protects us, shows compassion for us, and loves us despite our mistakes.

Many who become Christians and have a conversion will experience a natural desire to not self-abuse. If faith in God falters, however, the Christian might go back to their old ways.

A strong belief in God's love can, therefore, help us out of the cycle of self-abuse. Love is a powerful tool for healing.

Accepting God's love for us also means accepting our worth.

If we need to be punished for something, we should leave that in God's hands. He usually chose mercy, which can sometimes be hard to accept for a self-abuser because it goes against what their bodies and instincts are used to. Again, here we see «the flesh» working against the spirit to our downfall.

Here, too, a believer should reject «the flesh» and choose "God's spirit» and be led by it instead.

You might not feel worthy of mercy; you might not feel deserving of it; you might want punishment to feel at ease; you might feel your identity is being the bad guy; yet you must reject these feelings and accept God's love. For a damaged human, this can be hard, but once they do it, they will find freedom.

Some Christians who have done self-abuse before becoming Christians. When their faith falters, by instinct, God is placed in the position of an abuser. This way, they can re-enact the role-playing they feel gives them relief. They might also preach God as an abuser to others, thinking it will save them. God often deals with damaged people who misrepresent Him. It is part of life.

Some who lose sight of God's love may develop a fearful relationship with God where God becomes a watcher, waiting to see if they fail. Fearing that He is noticing every little imperfection so that He can use it to harm and punish you. This is how they grew up with an authority figure, so it comes naturally to expect this behavior from God. Then they hurry and punish themselves, thinking this will please God.

This is just another way of reacting to the abuse-abuser situation. God, being strong and in authority, becomes the natural choice for an abuser. There are many Christians who have an abusive relationship with God that is self-created, and that God is not really a part of. It is an imaginary relationship where they have given it to God to play out the role-play they are used to. Unfortunately, sometimes when God answers their prayer, they take it as confirmation that God is who they imagine Him to be.

In these cases, it is essential to understand who God is so that we do not impose on Him a character or personality that is not His. Understanding this is part of the path to healing for a Christian trauma survivor.

A self-harming Christian happens, and usually, it is because they have given God an abusive role in their life so that they can maintain their identity as a victim. It is a complicated matter, as a self abuser is both victim and abuser, and their victimhood can lie in identifying themselves as the bad guy while desiring mercy as the victim. It is destructive to try to place a God-image inside this game. Some do to God what they do to themselves, and God is considered not only their abuser but also their victim, perfectly continuing the circle of punishing themselves for being a "bad Christian" and then becoming "God's victim" after completing self-punishment and hurting. This is a mental health problem; it is not Christianity.

All of this is damaging; any type of self-abuse is damaging. Witnessing falsehoods about God to ourselves is also damaging and does not lead us to salvation. Instead, we push away the one who can help us.

By taking responsibility for our mistakes and faults, we can apologize, seek pardon, and move on. Following the sanctuary pattern God has set up.

A Christian has little right to revenge themselves outside of God's court system.

A Christian needs to understand that we have no right to punish ourselves or others on God's behalf. God says we are precious to Him—our lives and existence. We are not allowed to abuse ourselves. God does not desire for us to abuse ourselves, and it becomes clear when we read the following verse:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1Co 3:16-17).

We cannot be accelerated in the courts of heaven for having put ourselves on trial and judged ourselves. That is not how God's court works. Yet for someone who self-abuses, this notion can seem terrifying, for self-punishment gives a sense of control, and they fear authority figures more than they fear themselves. If you experience this problem or know someone who has, help them understand that God is not like their abuser and that He is a merciful judge ready to forgive and forget. In numerous instances, God is more merciful than we are toward ourselves. Trust in God's mercy can help stop self-harm. Remember, when you are hard on yourself, you will also be hard on others. It is not a private matter.

Earthly courts work the same way, we can't pick our punishment and execute it ourselves. Imagine if someone did something wrong towards you and they «cut themselves» in front of you and said, "Are you happy now»? You would rather see proper justice or forgive them. To take an extreme example: If someone abused your child, you would wish that person to be held accountable. Watching them punch themselves in the face would hardly give you or your child that closure. Nor does it reflect true repentance.

A Christian punishing themselves is just trying to avoid the punishment they fear. When you are punished by others, you are not in control. When you punish yourself, you feel in control because you have pity on yourself as your victim and know when to stop.

It is just another fear reaction. Our enactment response to our sin is not holy or accepted by God. He wants us to break free of self-abuse and self-punishment and trust that we can leave it to Him to be fair and compassionate.

God is not our abuser, nor does He wish to be. When God punishes, it is not abuse; it is justice. If you are judged, it is because you did harm someone, not for God to satisfy some self-needed aggression like a narcissistic abuser does. An abuser is usually out of control, does not follow rules, is unfair, takes their issues out on others, and needs to push someone down to feel better themselves. God is none of these things. He uses order and systems; He will only be fair; He does not have issues; rather, He is dealing with our issues with each other, and He has no need to push others down to feel better about Himself. He wants humans to succeed, excel, and be strong and healthy.

God does not punish like an abuser does, and so a damaged person does not have to fear God as they would their abuser. God punishes only fairly and by order.

A victim feels powerless in an abusive relationship in part because they cannot predict when, why, or how the abuser will strike. So, they "walk on eggshells" for the abuser, never knowing when they might have done something to anger them.

God is apparent, and it is the reason He does not need people to "walk on eggshells» for Him, He has a written law. He says we are judged by this law, and we are given the right to know its words, how it works, and even when a punishment is given. In addition to making a law clearly expressing His definition of «fair» we are given a chance at pardon if we wish to change. Nothing is unexpected or a surprise, unless we have deceived ourselves or decided to be bad. A thief might go "on eggshells," scared to be caught, but he knows he is doing something wrong and what he will be judged by; he has willingly decided to take the risks he is taking. A narcissist might "walk on eggshells," worried his lies will be exposed, but he continues anyway. This is not the type of "eggshell" a victim walks on around an abuser. Those who harm others should fear the Lord's judgment, as much as they do the earthly. It must not be confused with an abuser-victim relationship.

A court system on earth is not an abuser either. Because it has a law, we know it is not trying to abuse anyone when it judges according to it. They are just preserving peace in society and preventing a person from further damaging their surroundings.

It is the same way with God. God's law is evidence that God's reign is a justice system, not "an abusive father and his children".

No one can stand before an earthly court and tell the judge that the whole trial is unnecessary because they will punish themselves instead. This is lawlessness at its best. No court with respect for itself will accept this, and neither does God.

A court does not judge because it hates the defendant, despises him or wants to humiliate him. It just wants to obtain justice and order. Neither does God judge because he hates someone. The difference is that a court is unbiased in its judgment. It focuses on the crime, not on the personal feelings of the one who committed it. God's love for mankind, knowing each person's story, is biased toward saving them and giving them the chance of a pardon. An earthly court does not have love, but it can see potential and wish for the wellbeing of the accused and for him to rehabilitate.

Self-harm is not a reenactment of a court system or of God's court; it is just a reenactment of abuse. It is driven by self-loathing, and it is blind.

Thus, God does not desire or want His children to self-punish or self-harm. Rather, if we do feel sorry about something we said or experienced, we can reflect and seek His guidance.

Self-harm is not humility; it is aggression and the desire for control. It does not go well in a relationship with God, for we play god when doing it. The word translated "God" in the Bible is Elohim, which simply means judge.

" For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God" (1.John 3:20).

Self-harm is a rejection of God's court system and sanctuary. We are sitting in His temple, showing ourselves as gods. This is a great shame, for in God's sanctuary, the sin was transferred to the animal, and the animal was sacrificed in our place. Christ took our punishment so that we could go free. These sacrifices represented Christ's sacrifice for us. At its worst, self-harm is rejecting Christ's sacrifice for us. He took our punishment to save us.

A Christian needs to consider this before self-harming: that they take their sins out of Christ's hands when He is about to pay for them and put them back on themselves.

A victim of abuse is used to having to be the sin bearer and take the guilt of others' sin. It can therefore be a great inner battle to go against «the flesh» and trained instincts to let Christ take their sin and be punished in their place. In a strange way, Christ «steals» what had been their role. And so they refuse Christ and make Him the abuser instead so that they can uphold the role play of their abuse. Then they are lost.

For God this must be devastating, wanting to especially save the damaged and weak, only to see them refuse His gift and portray Him as an offender.

A Christian who has these issues needs to deny themselves and give Christ their sin. They must accept the role God has given them, to be loved. They are no longer to be sin-bearers for their abusers.

Understanding that Christ taking a role they have had does not make them the abuser. Understand that God and others, even ourselves, are not to follow a pattern created by sick and sinful people.

Let God give you freedom from self-abuse—from splitting your personality into either victim or abuser, or both at the same time. Leave all this behind. Learn to know God as He is and what He is about. Let Christ take your sin and the punishment for it. You are not an abuser for making Christ your sin-bearer, for Christ took it willingly because He loves you and is your Father. It is self-sacrifice for his children, something an abused child has never experienced before.

Understanding and learning for the first time these concepts properly is important to get out of the abusive, self-abusive situation and find freedom.

If you are helping such a person, telling them God is a «father» and «loves you» is not enough. More knowledge about what this means is needed. Because they don't have instincts and knowledge of what this really is. Knowledge and experience are therefore key.

It is sad that sometimes those most hurt by sin are also those who struggle the most to receive Christ's sacrifice. God knows this and is willing to work extra hard for these people. He knows it is not evil or hatred towards Him that keeps them away, but a learned behavior.

The solution is to unlearn this behavior. It does not take just words, but practice and repetition.

Many victims of abuse will not be in heaven because they could never free themselves from their roles.

For the Christian who is damaged like this and wishes to be with God, there is only one way to do it.

There is no salvation outside of Christ. At the end, we decide and choose between our role-play and the real Christ.

Christ offers freedom. Our role-playing will destroy us. A house «in conflict with itself will not remain standing.” “But if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed». (Matt.12:25; Joh.8:32)

Practical exercise towards freedom

- *Physical and mental training for long-term trauma victims to regain control over their bodies and minds.*
- *Going from trauma response to mindful free will*
- *Changing your lifestyle, food, drink, who you are around, and how you use your time*

Freedom from victimhood and long-term trauma does not just lie in the head; more parts of our body are affected. The whole-body stores negative memories. All humans have cellular memory. It can even change our DNA. Countless instincts and reactions occur bodily before even our thoughts have registered what has happened.

Medical professionals are studying how heart transplants, transfer cellular memory from the deceased to the recipient of the donation.

(<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31739081/>, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-a-cell-remember/>)

Many recipients of transplants have claimed to have experienced a change in food preference and other personality traits. There is still a lot that is unstudied and misunderstood on this topic. More research is needed to see just how much our life decisions affect our cells and even our DNA.

Recovering from sin and trauma is not just a mental exercise; it must involve the whole body.

Recent discoveries have found that our gut has a type of brain of its own. “Scientists call this little brain the *enteric nervous system*,” with “more than 100 million nerve cells”

(<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-brain-gut-connection>)

Although we cannot change what has happened to us and to others, we can work with our bodies to achieve more harmony and strength. That is why what we eat can also be tied to our healing. If we are constantly triggering the nervous system through an unhealthy lifestyle, it will also make it harder to overcome mental challenges.

The heart is also similar to our brains and sends signals to them. It has its own “little brain or intrinsic cardiac nervous system”. (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31728781/>). These are just examples of how involved our whole body is in not only our traumas but also our healing.

Although many would like to think that recovery from trauma just involves “talking with a therapist,” it does not. A man can endure countless traumas without succumbing to their aftereffects if his or her nervous system is strong. We cannot change the past, but we can somewhat improve our health, and the health that is connected to the mind is in such a way that for some, it is about whether they can manage their lives or not.

Finding mental freedom from victimhood therefore involves practical exercises as well as mental ones. In the world, we have doctors who heal the body and mental health workers who aim to heal the mind, but doctors rarely understand the physical harm mental trauma has left on a patient and rarely can offer much help until the body fully develops the diseases from all the stress. This can take time, yet the body is sick long before. Likewise, a mental health worker can help you work on your mind, but unless the body is included, you will not really recover. The body will work against your mind. Most patients continue to struggle and focus on their issues after therapy. You cannot entirely understand what has happened to you without understanding how it is affecting your entire body. To get the strength to move on with life, it is significant to consider working on the body, mind, and spirit.

Everything is connected; every little part of our body has experienced those traumas, not just your mind. Your body is one, and therefore one part won't suffer without every other part taking part in the suffering.

The reason alternative health workers are so popular, even when shunned by doctors and psychiatrists, is that most people who struggle with trauma understand the importance of connecting mind and body. When there is no proper help that involves both, they desperately seek help from alternatives. This leads many into the hands of exploiters, quacks, occultists, and people in it for money. Many empty their pockets in vain, but some do find help with alternatives. If the medical world had not been so determined to keep doctors and mental health workers separate to uphold traditional roles and status, the need for alternative practices would not have been so pressing.

When sin started spreading among people in the world, it changed human nature from balanced to imbalanced. Our minds are now trained to think and act destructively. Our bodies are trained to fear and act on that fear. Growing up with childhood trauma leads to real handicaps stemming from the long-term stress on the brain and body. Although you might not heal completely, it is possible to obtain strength enough to live a good life and not continue the destructiveness inflicted upon you.

When Christ returns, He has promised to restore our bodies to their original and intended perfect state: *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself"* (Phil 3:20-21).

Although our bodies are weak, that does not mean we cannot reflect Christ.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15-16).

Christ was under extreme circumstances for many years, but did not sin. To many, His victory seems judgmental to those who do sin, but Christ wanted to pave the way for us and give us hope with His victory, not boast.

Christ came as a human like us but did not let the evil that came over Him change Him or cause Him to harm others, and this is what He wants for us.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:2-3)

Christ has paved the way for us to do as He did through the help of the Spirit. What is broken and causes us to lose control can be replaced by the Spirit, so we can still do what is right, even if our instincts want us to do what is wrong.

Reaching out to God for help is, therefore, the first step in our recovery.

Understanding how our bodies work is also very useful.

If the body is stressed, we will get sick, and so finding strength in reacting to what happens in the right way not only prevents a trauma survivor from causing more hurt and damage, it will also give them peace and better health.

Just like someone who has lost a leg has to adjust to their handicap, so does a trauma survivor. It is more work to not have a leg, get up, and find accessibility. It requires coming to terms with the fact that more must be done than putting on shoes and running out of the house. Someone who has lost a leg cannot say one day, “I am so sick of not having a leg; today I will deny I lost a leg and live as if I have two”. His delusions will not change his handicap. So, it is with a trauma survivor. Pretending they do not have weaknesses is not going to make them go away. Although they should not constantly focus on their weaknesses, they must respect that they have them. If not, it will lead to unwanted confrontations and a buildup of anger or anxiety that will be aimed at the wrong people.

A trauma survivor who is still afflicted by their experiences should consider taking conscious precautions to handle their everyday life.

Many victims want to change their surroundings and other people, even politics, in the confused notion that if the world “outside” changes, their “inside will heal”. However, as long as a sin is in the world, we cannot remove things that will trigger us completely. And if we are triggered easily, it is a sign that we have not healed. To make a silly example to illustrate the point. A person struggling with obesity cannot find healing in banning cakes and stopping others from enjoying them. Many people with long-term trauma have similar demands that are unreasonable to others. If healthy, productive people must adjust their lives as if they were sick people too, then progress ends there. Progressing means learning from mistakes and continuing to move forward, and society must do that. It cannot adjust to mental illness and act on trauma when creating legislation and opportunities. Then the sick are not really cured; they only have a delusion of a cure, and all the healthy individuals are prevented from excelling and progressing. As Christians, we are to make the world a better place by acting out Christ's principles and by being an example and an inspiration. To promote health, healing, and even forgiveness.

If we truly want healing, we must make changes in our lives, bodies, and minds. The following is some practical training that professionals have discovered about the human body that can help us regain some of our bodily and mental strength.

Self-care to regain control over your body:

The physical part:

Healing the nervous system:

There is not one uniform solution for every case, but there are things that help improve the mental health of everyone. Although changing habits and denying yourself the food and drink you crave might seem troublesome, remember that freeing your mind means taking control and regulating the body. You need to teach your body to do the right thing; don't let the body teach your mind. If you do, then your taste buds would tell you candy is "good for you" because it tastes delicious. The body has memory, and if it normally gets its nutrition from unhealthy foods, it will crave them and make you feel like you can't live without them. If you start feeding your body healthy, nutritious food instead, after only a few weeks (for some, even days), your body will actually "change its memory" and start craving healthy food instead. Your body just wants nutrition and will urge you to continue eating so it can get it. That is why you must be the master of your body and teach it what food to crave by what you give it. Every so often the body asks for food when it is thirsty if it is used to getting most of its fluid from food and not water. You cannot trust your body; you must teach it. Consider your body like a pet dog. It will act on instinct and misbehave if you do not train it to obey you. You must impute the right instincts so that you can trust your dog.

You tell your body what is good, and after a while you will regain control, and it will work with you instead of against you. For some, it might be a bigger battle than others. Especially if food has been used to regulate emotions and hormones. It can still be done; only prepare yourself to replace unhealthy food with healthy food by making sure you have other ways of regulating emotions and hormones in addition, or your body will get stressed during the transition.

The gut is sometimes called the "second brain" because it contains many nerve cells that produce many neurotransmitters and signaling molecules, including dopamine.

If you have damage that makes it hard to regulate emotions, it is important to stay away from things that irritate the nervous system. If this is done, you will have more strength to handle minor daily conflicts. You don't have to "lose control" and snap at "the postman". Eating "nerve-friendly" food can make a great difference.

Caffeine has a negative influence on the nervous system as well, and it is important to avoid it altogether if you struggle with nerves. Just remember that the first few days, even weeks, off caffeine, you might feel the nerve system is even more haywired. Typically, it can get worse before it gets better. So don't give up too fast. In a transition period, make sure your everyday life is not filled with stress and challenges. It can be hard to adjust at such times. Pick a time when you can afford to take the extra time needed to relax enough to not feel overpowered and worse off by the habit changes. Remember, if you get even a little victory over the things that irritate your nerves, it will help the mental training you need to do go smoother. But do not do mental training in the middle of a transition, as this will increase bodily stress.

Eating late in the evening causes the stomach to work on digesting food while you sleep, which means your body will have less rest than it needs. Rest is critical for a trauma survivor, so make sure you don't eat for the last few hours before you go to sleep if you want an optimal night's rest.

Constantly snacking and eating too many meals also irritate the nervous system. Pick one to three meals per day that are not too large and that are not too hard for your digestion. If you have to do physical labor, you might need more food than if you work sitting still. Your food intake should reflect how active you are. If you want to eat big meals, eat them early in the day and not late in the afternoon. The earlier you have your last meal, the better. Try at least to avoid it after 18:00, so the body can work on digesting most of the meal before you go to bed. It's hard to change the first few days, but the body learns, and you will stop being hungry in the evening if you teach your body not to. We were created to teach and control our bodies, not let our bodies control us.

If you have an eating disorder following your trauma that makes you eat too little (anorexia), it is important not to let this advice be used to further your illness. Many people with anorexia can easily adapt to changes like these in an unhealthy way and make food their religion. So, for an anorectic, it is important to eat more often if needed. If you must eat late, choose the easiest food to digest, like fruit.

A long-term trauma survivor needs their body to rest when it is supposed to; they cannot gamble as much as a healthy individual without suffering for it. So, letting the stomach rest, especially at night and between meals, is crucial for the nervous system to be under control.

If you eat things that constantly irritate the body, it will be harder for you to control sudden emotions and regulate your nerves. Many trauma survivors struggle with irritable bowel disorders. If you feel you're struggling to digest the food or have pain after eating, consult a doctor for a diagnosis or follow your "gut". There are special diets needed for people with irritable bowel disorders, and if not followed, the nervous system will struggle. Some vegetables are only healthy if you are well. If you have an irritable bowel disorder, you cannot eat these types of food groups and maintain a calm nervous system at the same time.

Many trauma survivors prefer gluten-free products, not because they have a gluten allergy, but because they have undiagnosed irritable bowel syndrome or insulin intolerance. If you struggle with your stomach, consult a doctor to make sure you know what foods irritate your system, so you can stay away from them daily. If your doctor does not take you seriously, find another who does. Plenty of doctors don't understand how to consider all symptoms to be related, and some can easily dismiss and distress the bodily struggle of a trauma survivor. Don't take it personally; it is just ignorance. A Christian doctor might be more helpful in understanding how a wounded soul struggles with normal bodily functions, as the Bible has always connected the two.

Drinking enough water is also important for gut health. Make sure you often drink and don't dehydrate yourself. Your body needs pure, clean water to function at its best.

Your digestion is closely tied to your nerves and your ability to cope with challenges better, so take it seriously if you want to gain more control.

Alcohol also affects the nervous system and does no one any favors. In the old days, alcohol was often given to distressed women to calm them down. However, the little temporary relief you experience

using alcohol to calm your nerves will just be followed by even more struggles afterward. A hangover is not great for the nerves. Consider avoiding alcohol as part of your medicine.

It is not a secret that a good deal of domestic violence is caused by consuming alcohol. It will also tip over someone with unresolved trauma, as many abusers have.

Long-term stress and weight gain

If you have had long-term stress, your body might struggle with insulin intolerance. If this is your situation, eat a low-carb diet if possible. You will notice that you have this issue if you eat as normally as others but suffer weight gain or struggle to lose weight even on a low-calorie diet. In this situation, a low carbohydrate diet might be the only thing that can help you regain control over your weight.

Eating unhealthy foods often gives you dopamine, so remember to get your dopamine differently so that you do not feel more stressed while cutting out the wrong foods.

Ways to get dopamine healthily are through exercise, eating protein, getting enough sleep, listening to the right music, direct sunlight, massage, relaxation exercises, and other such things.

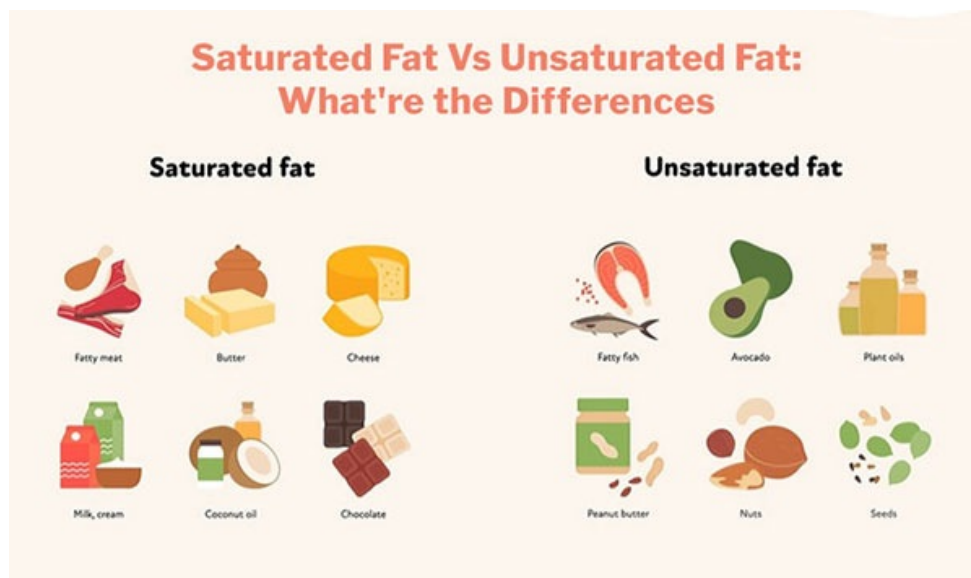
If you can, stay away from saturated fats, as they are disruptive and cause your body to fool itself into thinking you are not full when you are full. Saturated fat causes us to overeat.

“As we consume food, the brain releases the neurotransmitter dopamine as a messenger to the central nervous system. The dopamine activates specific neural circuits to tell us we are full and feel content. During his postdoc, Fordahl measured dopamine neurotransmission in response to diets high in saturated fat and found significant reductions in regular dopamine message delivery”

(<https://www.uncg.edu/research/nutrition-professor-high-saturated-fat-diets/>)

If you eat meat, skip the fat, just like God commanded in the Torah. (Lev.7:25) A lot of meat products are filled with fat, like sausages and burger patties. Remember, if you feel panicked about avoiding some of these foods, remind yourself that this panic is instinct-based and will slowly go away the more

healthy you eat. It is about repetition and patience, your body will learn and start craving the food that helps you heal.



Sugar:

Sugar triggers addiction. If you struggle with being addicted to certain foods or even drugs, consider cutting out sugar completely from your diet. It, too, irritates your nervous system and triggers negative behavior.

Sugar feels good; it gives you a high, the body briefly rewards you, and then it will bring you down again.

Sugar releases opioids and dopamine, and you feel rewarded and happy when you first eat it. It works on your body just like drugs do, and when you try to quit eating it, many will experience withdrawal symptoms. This can include headaches, muscle pain, and even depression. However, if you pull through and don't give in, these symptoms will go away.

Sugar works on us similarly to heroin. It is an addiction, and the body is constantly irritated by this addiction.

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2235907/>)

Being a long-term trauma survivor with a sugar addiction means you will struggle with behavioral issues tied to the addiction. An irritated body will cause you to be an irritated person if you don't get your "fix". The more our moods are controlled by what we eat, the less the Holy Spirit can impress us.

If you want control over your physical and mental health, stay away from sugar or only eat it in controlled settings. If you have a past sugar addiction, even a taste can make you lose control again, just like an alcoholic. Be cautious, but if you fail, don't give up. Again, the body learns through repetition. If you keep rejecting its unhealthy urges, even if you fail now and then, it will still have a positive effect eventually.

If you absolutely want sugar, try to plan to have it when you are going on a hike instead of in front of the TV, if you are forced to skip a meal because of a busy schedule or a similar situation where you are active when you eat it.

Too many harsh rules can lead to desperation.

Some trauma victims feel desperate if life becomes too strict, hard, or full of rules. It can even trigger their trauma of feeling captive and subdued. And so, some will struggle with rules that don't have an "escape route". This is because trauma sits in the body. Escape, for many who have been trapped in long-term trauma situations, has been food. Food is one of the most commonly used tools for self-soothing and self-comfort. The body will therefore naturally fight any rules that deprive you of the food you use for comfort. If you take away the "escape" stress reliever that food can be, many feels unsafe and suppressed again. It is important to consider all these things and to understand oneself completely. If the cure feels traumatic, there will be a problem. Healthy rules can feel abusive, especially when breaking them has brought stress relief before. Know yourself; therefore, consider this and allow yourself to feel in control over the healthy advice you follow.

If you are too strict, you will fail. If you are not strict at all, you will fail too.

Find the area or space where you feel in control while doing what is right for your body.

Again, it is crucial to not just remove everything that is giving you stress relief without replacing it with other things that give you stress relief. If not, you might feel desperate or have nagging anxiety when making life changes.

Consider the other elements: you need stress-relieving hormones if you have a lot of inner stress. Just look for a healthy way to get them. Don't make your body choose between illness from food and illness from stress. Give it the third option: healthy stress relief and food that is healthy for you.

Find motivation in gaining freedom over your emotional stress, thoughts, and reactions. Finding motivation is your turning point; without it, you can do little, and will not succeed.

For those who struggle with loving themselves, taking care of themselves might not be motivation enough. You can't succeed with a healthy change without wishing yourself well. Understanding God's love for you, the value you have in His eyes, and dwelling on His compassion and desire to save you can help with motivation.

If you struggle to love yourself, rest in His love.

If someone feels worthless, or makes others feel worthless, Christ compared it to murder, (Mat 5:22 Raca means worthless) because in a way it is. If we allow ourselves to feel worthless, we won't care for our needs and won't be motivated to do ourselves right. The feeling of worthlessness takes away all motivation. The mind and body are connected. We cannot obtain physical or nerve health with a sick mind. Likewise, we cannot obtain a healthy mind with a sick, irritated body. The road to recovery begins with valuing ourselves like God does and not like those who mistreated us did.

"For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones" (Isa.49:13)

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (James 5:13).

If you stumble on your way, remember that God is not condemning you but cheering on you to make it. “Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1.Pet.5:7).

Rest enough

Go to bed early and get up early. Make sure you get melatonin naturally by getting up early in the morning and going outside. This will help you sleep in the evening, as melatonin production is what makes us sleepy. Pills can ruin your natural production, but they can be used for a couple of days to help you get into the right habit if you can't do it the natural way. The pills can have side effects, though, so stay away if you can.

People in the old days experienced a lot of trauma and hardship, but they had an advantage we do not have today. They did not have a TV, a phone, or other screens to keep them up longer than they should. Turn off your screens a couple of hours before bed to make sure you can fall asleep. For a long-term trauma survivor, getting enough sleep is important. Our modern age is destroying the weak and weakening them by taking their sleep away. Many who suffer from depression sit up late at night in front of screens and sleep away the first hours of the day. Losing melatonin production also reduces the immune system. It is a lose-lose situation on all ends. Just regaining the sleeping hours before midnight can strengthen you more than you can imagine.

Remember, following these rules helps you not snap at your family and neighbors for little things. A calm, rested body gives you the chance to think calmly before you speak and act. This will make you happier because you will have less to regret, it will make others happier, and you will have more inner peace. A Christian trauma survivor should want this more than anything. Work with God, not against Him. In addition to nightly rest, God has also commanded a weekly rest, the Sabbath. If the creator deems it necessary for many to take time away from their struggles and everyday lives once a week, He knows what He is talking about. God's Sabbath is part of the rest humanity needs to conquer stress. “In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.” (Psa.4:8)

If you have a lot of inner stress and struggle to find your calm when going to bed, try to read a real book instead of an e-book, social media, or entertainment. The real book will also help silence the racing thoughts and put your head in a more calm state.

Lastly, if there are important events or additional stressful situations, make sure to add more time to rest to be able to handle them.

In the Bible, we see Christ choosing solitude in prayer after hard work (Mark.6:30-32), when grieving a loss (Matt.14:1-13), before making an important decision (Luke 6:12-13) and in times of distress (Luke 22:39-44). Even Jesus had to add time for healing to his schedule to gain the strength He needed (Luke 5:16).

Calm exercise.

Exercise is important, but make sure you do not stress your body. Choose exercise that is not too hard, like walking or cycling in nature. Don't rush or overdo anything if you are a long-term trauma survivor.

Use breathing techniques. Get healthy air, practice, and train your breathing. Stress makes oxygen intake lower, and you need to try to compensate by considering your breathing.

Although a Christian should not do yoga because of the religious aspect and its connection to idol worship, we should not be afraid to do a similar slow-paced workout with breathing techniques.

Yoga is good for stress because it harmonizes with the body's needs that God has created. Take back what belongs to God and cut out the religious and sexually loaded poses.

Meditation is in the Bible, but it is about meditation on God's goodness and love:

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" (Gen.24:23)

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa. 26:3)

If you do not have stress damage, you can easily do more heavy and fast-paced exercise.

Everyone is in bad shape when they start exercising, so don't do too much too fast. Work slowly. Going for a walk for 3 hours the first day you start will leave your body stressed and exhausted, and you'll be less likely to go for another walk the next day. So be smart and start slow. Train the body. It will be able to take more and more. But if you struggle with constant emotional stress in your life, be careful not to exercise too intensely, or it will have the opposite effect and increase anxiety.

Exercise releases stress-relieving hormones and will help you feel less need to gain those hormones through eating and other unhealthy, destructive habits.

(<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000807.htm> ;

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/fitness/are-you-exercising-too-much-heres-how-to-tell-and-why-it-can-be-risky/>)

Remove yourself from destructive people.

If you are with an abusive spouse, friend, boss, co-worker, or family, and there is no hope of them changing, you should leave. Staying under constant stress long term is only ever harmful. If you are trapped in a harmful situation, ask someone for help. There are places everywhere that help victims. Don't be afraid of change. No one should live in an abusive relationship. It is not your fault if they do not wish to see a reason or change. Choose freedom if it is possible. Only the strongest person can survive suppression and not be affected by it. Most cannot.

Christ quoted Isaiah regarding His mission: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound"* (Isa.61:1, Luk 4:18) When Jesus quoted this verse, it came out differently in the New Testament transcript. It says Christ said: "to preach deliverance to the captives" instead of "prison to those who are bound". The meaning is the same, though. The good news here is the Greek word: "εὐαγγελίζω" meaning the gospel, to evangelize. Christ knows suppression is like sin afflicting the body, and he wants to set us free from both sin and stress. It is part of the gospel.

Many do not want to leave because the person who abuses them keeps crying and asking for forgiveness. It seems unchristian to deny them that forgiveness, and so many Christians stay.

Consider this: that you might be a temptation for them, that you tempt them to lose control, and that you help them by leaving and forcing them to solve their issues outside the abusive relationship. You do not help or rescue anyone by helping their repetitive patterns by engaging in their role-playing. If an abuser is stuck in a repetitive pattern with you, removing yourself from the situation might actually help them. We don't always know our own good, especially abusers. Every so often, it is best for them that you leave, as well as for yourself. It does not have to be an act of hate; it can be an act of love. People get stuck in unhealthy role-plays all the time, some worse than others. Notice if you have taken on a repetitive role in your abuser's cycle, and find a way to step out of that role. If you are strong enough to cut your part in the "role play" and wish to stay, you might help the other person that way.

Jesus said: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee" (Matt.18:8) This seems to be meant metaphorically, which makes the statement fit also inter-human relations. To detach yourself from who and what is causing the problem if you are not strong enough to handle or help them.

Staying in a repetitive, abusive situation is not going to save that person, and it won't save you. You are not good because someone else is bad. You will only truly know yourself outside of an abusive relationship. A person who easily claims victimhood might even trigger an abuser to abuse them, so they can maintain their "role-play". A victim can abuse and inspire an abuser to abuse too. Especially in relationships between a man and a woman. It is not uncommon for a male trauma survivor to act out trauma behavior violently, and a woman to act out hers in a manipulating way. Trauma victims find each other, and the woman manipulates and the man physically retaliates, but both trigger each other to destruction.

A victim can be a bad person. All in all, God will judge in the end. But if two people are in a destructive role-play pattern, both are served by separation, whether it is child and parent, husband and wife, boss and employee, or other relations. Either if you have no fault or if you do trigger the other with your trauma response, it might be best to leave for both parties.

If there is no hope or willingness (shown in acts and communication) to change, separation is the only healthy solution.

Too often, women who have been sexually abused by their father bring their daughters to be babysat by their parents, apparently clueless that their daughters will be abused as well. The willingness to forgive and forget easily can, at worst, be directly harmful to others. In such a situation, the only right thing to do is to separate the family and daughters(sons) from the father. Christianity is not about harming or allowing harm to come to others; it is about saving people from harm and destruction.

In such a case when truth and sin collide, Jesus allows even family bonds to be destroyed: "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mat 10:34-37).

Don't pay trauma forward.

Choose your battles. If you experience constant unfairness growing up in a toxic situation, you may fall into the trap of getting offended by every person that comes your way.

For instance, the person who took your parking space, a cake divided unequally, or someone giving you more of the work in an assignment at work. It can be a look someone gives you. It can be something as silly as someone walking in your lane on the pavement and forcing you to step to the side.

Every little thing triggers the adult who once was a child who could not speak up against unfairness. So many people start making little things in their everyday lives an emotional battle. They fight for justice in every little aspect of life.

Although it is a typical trauma language, it is also, unfortunately, what can make you an awful human being.

We cannot shout at someone who unthoughtfully cut the line in the fast-food restaurant because of unfairness done to us in the past.

A Christian should have tolerance, but as a trauma survivor, tolerance can be hard. Because if you are the woman shouting at the children in the streets who are a little loud, you are acting out a large injustice done to you in the past upon a small injustice done that day.

It is also self-destructive. If you get emotionally involved in every little injustice committed throughout the day or week, you will lose your strength and ability to handle the larger and more difficult problems.

It is therefore important for a long-term trauma survivor to be conscious of this. Fighting unnecessarily battles makes you an unloving person, and you lose the strength needed to take care of people in your life because of a situation that really doesn't matter.

So, if a car is parked close to your trunk that you need to open, it is not critical. It is a minor inconvenience. The man or woman who did this is not your perpetrator, not someone who is after you or wants to take your rights from you. They are just thoughtless. It does not matter why they did it. We are all thoughtless. Don't attack people who make little mistakes or are unfair about little things. Love them and have empathy for them. Be kind in return. They are not part of your trauma, and they should not pay the price for it. It solves nothing to pick every battle we run into and make it our fight for world justice.

It will drain you completely and make you feel like you are under constant threat. Some who choose this path can even end up with paranoia because there is so much to be triggered by that it might end up looking like a targeted conspiracy. Remember, people who are afraid are also selfish, this includes you too. When you are afraid, you act on instinct, selfishly, for your survival. You don't see things as you should, to the benefit of all. You do not see things clearly.

Many act this way because they could not protect themselves in the past, they could not fight the injustice done to them, and they compensate by fighting it now in all the wrong places with all the wrong people.

This makes the world a more unsafe place if everyone does this.

As a Christian trauma survivor, it is not the way to be.

Neither is it healthy for you or those in your life.

Save your strength for the greater battles—the necessary ones. And try to focus, when triggered in public, on your need for justice and try to see things from other perspectives. Show grace, patience, and tolerance instead. Gain strength from these little events rather than lose it. Choose Christ's method: turn the other cheek.

Be conscious and aware of your issue, and have a mental response ready for these small injustices.

Whether it is prayer, counting to ten, using a sense of humor, or repaying thoughtlessness with kindness, whatever calms you down.

Choose your battles.

The mental part:

Strengthening the mind

When we work to give our bodies their strength back, we can't forget the mind. As previously mentioned, challenge yourself slowly with tasks that boost your confidence and give you a feeling of regaining control.

A new hobby, learning a new skill, and practicing conquering smaller fears first. It could be just approaching a spider instead of running from it. It could be learning a new craft. Pick something that is less typical of what you normally do.

Trauma survivors tend to have many phobias and fears because they struggle with their self-confidence and the feeling of not having control over what happens to them. This means there is a lot to start with. If you have irrational fears and you know they are irrational, that is a good place to start. Teach your mind by doing the thing you fear, teach it that you are in charge. Make the body trust you and experience that what you irrationally feared did not happen. And if it did, then you came out of it fine.

Whether it's jumping from the diving board at the swimming pool you thought looked a bit scary or something more challenging like climbing. You can use many small obstacles in life that you normally avoid as training. All to build up your self-esteem and confidence. This is training the brain.

Always set a new goal ahead of you. Don't set a goal that is too hard, as that might have the opposite effect and make you feel useless. Be reasonable. If your goal is not possible to reach, you are self-sabotaging when you set it. It will become a confirmation of the self-destructive thought that you cannot accomplish anything or do anything right.

Start with goals you can achieve with some effort and mental training. Don't give up. If you give up too easily, you train your mind to think you were right all along, and you can't do anything right. Continue, or put it aside and change it for another goal. The point is that if you have no self-confidence, it has to be trained.

Many trauma survivors also struggle with social anxiety. Here, training in social settings is better than just hiding away. A social setting where you all are doing an activity might be a good place to start.

Then you will not feel the focus is on you, but on the task you all must do. If you are trying a new hobby, you will meet other people who are trying it as well, and you will be on the same level working for the same goal. These are good situations to train social anxiety, as less aimless, unpredictable small talk is needed and is replaced with more focused, theme-targeted conversations. Adjust this advice to what triggers your social anxiety the most, and create a plan that fits your situation best.

There are so many ways to meet fears, and usually, you can face them by using a little cleverness and by approaching the fears from an angle instead of head-on. Finding and acting on a solution to solve your specific challenges will help you regain some self-confidence.

Make sure you are always moving forward. Every little or big goal you set for yourself and actively pursue will help you heal and give you back your mental freedom. Celebrate every victory.

Write lists with challenges you can and wish to do; make sure the list is always full, and you do as many as you can.

Learn to understand yourself.

You cannot change the past; only the present and future. Fight the temptation to feel bad every time you fail at something. Consider the process that led up to the failure as a teaching lesson. View failure not as a defeat but as a learning tool. A mistake is something you do, not something you are. Understand that you are in a body that is stressed by sin, and it does not work optimally, so you will fail at some point. All do. It does not have to take your courage away. When you fall, get back up and keep moving.

“Don’t sit in the hole you fell into and attack yourself for falling into it. This is something many trauma survivors do. They can even easily advise others to “get back up” and not be overwhelmed by failure, but they are too hard on themselves. Follow your advice. Give yourself the compassion you offer others. Say as the prophet Micah: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me” (Mic 7:8).

Understand hormones and how they work; learn to work with your body instead of just being led by it. If it has a need, find good ways to give it what it needs, instead of quick solutions. You can have trauma triggers without knowing it, and the only thing you experience is a need for relief. This is when many grab food, drugs, porn, and other easy solutions. Once you feel this sudden urge, ask yourself where it came from. Be conscious that something might have triggered you, and be prepared to give your body the stress relief it truly needs. Your body remembers things about your trauma that you have forgotten. It can be triggered by a smell, a scent, a color, an expression on a stranger’s face, a word, or many other things that are harmless. You are not in danger, but your body gets stressed all the same because of the trigger. A long-term trauma survivor should be conscious that the body has more triggers than we are aware of, and every so often the body doesn’t tell us what triggered it, only that it is stressed. Understanding the body’s language and taking control of what the body asks of us can help us get less stressed and use fewer quick solutions.

Put the blame where it belongs.

This is perhaps the most crucial point for recovery, and there is no complete recovery without it. A Christian victim might fool themselves into thinking that taking the blame for harm upon themselves is humility and charity. God's plan of salvation and sanctuary service is clear. We are not to be the bearers of others' sin. That will not save them or us. We might think that because Christ took our sin upon Himself, we are good Christians if we take others' sin upon us. What we really do is excuse sin and even justify it. Taking the blame for something that is not our fault is not charity to the abuser; it is preventing the abuser from giving their sin to Jesus. True Christendom is therefore helping the transgressor see their fault and pointing to Christ as a place for them to relieve this guilt.

The world has rejected God, and many struggle to carry their sin burdens, and so they put the blame on others. Some are willing to carry this burden. Family members who have been scapegoats in their dysfunctional families might continue to feel guilt that is not theirs even in adulthood.

The popular term gaslighting comes from this phenomenon, where instead of admitting and acknowledging one's fault, it is blamed upon another.

The apology: "I am sorry how you feel about what I did", rather than "I am sorry I did that to you," is another way of diverting blame. Those who apologize in this way claim that it is how their actions are perceived that is the "sin" and not their actions. Thus, they make the other take the blame for their actions.

It is very tempting to find innocence in blaming the others' sensitivity rather than your insensitivity.

We humans want to perceive ourselves as the good guys, especially Christians, and with that comes the temptation to see the problems in others rather than in ourselves. On the other side of the specter are survivors who are trained to take the blame and feel safe just blaming themselves to avoid confrontations. Both do wrong, and both hinder the right person from taking responsibility.

Mankind has many ways to divert sin, but only one brings salvation. That is, confessing it, taking responsibility for it, and then giving it to Jesus. There is no other way to be saved.

Many play a game with Christ as well. Instead of confessing that we have sinned against God, we try to make it God's fault in some way. God reacts as any healthy person would when given the blame for something we choose to do:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1Jn 1:8-10)

For many, who, for instance, grew up in unloving homes, the punishment did not fit the crime. For these children, hiding and explaining away sin was a survival method. And it is practiced in every aspect of their adult lives. Diverting blame, excusing wrongs, and blaming others.

From a biblical standpoint, this will not remove our sin.

Only by acknowledging and taking responsibility for our sins can we be free from them.

Diverting blame and taking others' blame are both trauma responses that we should deal with to have a good spiritual life and a good relationship with others.

If someone wrongs you, they carry full responsibility for that act. You carry full responsibility for yourself. In the Bible, we are judged by a standard God has set for all mankind. From this standard, we are to evaluate right from wrong and confess our wrongs.

By having a firm standard for right and wrong that is not obscure and uncertain, we can know who is in the wrong.

If someone has hurt us, and we are struggling to recover from it, make sure you put the blame for those actions on that person. You can forgive them, give them new chances, and even try to understand what underlying reason caused them to act in such a way. All is good for empathy and love. But what you must not do is call the "wrong" a "right" to acquit them or justify them. Or try convincing yourself that it "was not that bad". Once you start down that path, you will slowly begin to blur the borders of right and wrong and create blurred lines. These same blurred lines will harm yourself and others. If what another did that was bad is called less bad, then your reaction to it will be part of the problem, and thus blame has been wrongly diverted.

If you own a store and a thief steals all the valuables, it does not matter where he comes from, what brought him to that point, or if you owned the store through privilege. The act of stealing is still an act of stealing no matter why, how, or when it happens.

It is the same with acts that cause other forms of trauma. An act of cruelty is an act of cruelty, and kindness is kindness. We must call it what it is to find peace. If we do not, we suffer confusion and anxiety as a result.

Blaming ourselves for things that were out of our control will not give us healing. Make sure you don't lessen others' guilt by carrying part of it for the sake of peace.

You cannot take another person's blame and then ask God for forgiveness for it as if it were your crime. You will have to continue carrying the sense of guilt and blame that you took upon yourself until you give it back where it belongs. Give the responsibility to the perpetrator; only ask for forgiveness for your sin, and leave the perpetrator to ask God for forgiveness for his own. You can, of course, pray to God to help them see their sin and for God to be merciful and patient with them. You can pray to God to give them more chances. That is a different matter than taking blame that is not yours.

It is not true Christianity to make evil appear good, for when we do that, we will at the same time make good appear evil. The two go hand in hand and cannot be separated. Justifying evil means questioning what is good. If we make excuses for sin, we defend its existence.

Therefore, in the Bible, we see a God who gives no excuses for sin, a God who does not move an inch from His principles. The moment He does, He will have defended the existence of sin and then also legitimized it. By refusing to do this, He is upholding each human being's worth and rights to be loved and to be free.

On our road to recovery, we too must not confuse right and wrong, take blame that is not ours, or give blame to others that doesn't belong to them.

By taking responsibility and making others do the same, we can regain part of the sanity lost by the confusion created by the harmful acts.

Many people in mental institutions would have regained sanity only by being acquitted of wrongful blame and seeing the perpetrator held responsible. Placing blame in the wrong places creates anxiety, fear, apathy, self-destructiveness, and even madness.

Freedom is following the plan shown in God's sanctuary. You can experience temporary freedom by diverting blame, but your body remembers, and the peace will not last.

To summaries:

Your body: take care of your gut, avoid things that irritate the nervous system, get enough rest, exercise, breathe, and hydrate. Find stress relievers that are not destructive. Don't pay trauma forward.

Your mind: physically train your mind by challenging small and larger fears to regain mental control and self-esteem, make goals, see your worth, remove yourself from bad relationships, and put blame where the blame belongs. If it is yours, give it to Christ.

The last and most important training is a chapter on its own. It is crucial for healing and regaining a healthy mental balance.

Restore your trust in God.

- *This chapter is about the only thing that can restore a Christian's sanity and give us the strength, will, and motivation to make the changes we need to make to become whole.*

The origin of sin is thought to be Eve's disobedience when eating the fruit. The bite that caused Paradise to be lost and a world of sin to begin.

But what caused Paradise to be lost started not with the bite, but with Eve's distrust of God. If she had not lost trust in God, she would not have eaten the fruit.

Paradise lost and paradise gained are tied to the same thing: trusting God. Sin entered the world when mankind, for a moment, was deceived to lose trust in God, and we will conquer the sin in our lives when that trust is restored.

Most of the sin we Christians commit is done at moments when we distrust God. Living in fear is also a way of distrusting God. A Christian will therefore never experience healing or victory while distrusting God. It is not physically or mentally possible. We can do all the good things for our body and do all the mental training we wish, but if there is no trust in God, there is no victory.

Satan disguised as the serpent broke Eve's trust in God by hinting to her the following:

- God's standard is demanding (exaggerating to make God look unreasonable, although Eve corrected the serpent, he had still sown that seed of doubt) (ch.3 v.1)
- The reason for God's laws is selfish gratification. (Serpent insinuated God made the law because He was worried about competition) (ch.3 v.5)
- The serpent claimed God lied to protect himself (ch.3 v.3-4) (You cannot trust a liar. If He lied about that, what else had God lied about?).
- God did not have Eve's best interest at heart (withholding important knowledge from her to protect Himself). (ch-3 v.5)

These attacks are performed on many Christians even today, and they do not consider them. Satan exaggerates God's laws, and although we know the wording, the doubt that God expects even more is constantly suggested. Many Jews struggled with this for a long time, exaggerating and making many extra laws to make sure they kept the law properly. If we transported them to Eden, they would perhaps even abolish all the trees in the middle of the garden just to be on the safe side, depriving their people of the fruit God wanted to give as a blessing. Making God appear demanding and demanding things we feel are impossible to follow will breach the trust relationship. If we think God sets us up for failure just so He can justify His need to judge us, He becomes our enemy. Instead of God being our protector and loving father, He can become someone we fear making mistakes around. As if God is constantly

watching to see us make a mistake. God let mankind have children of their own to better understand who He is. We do not expect a newborn to work to provide for itself, and neither does God expect us to do what we cannot do. We do not judge or mock our children while they are trying to learn basic physical and mental skills; rather, we are proud of every success they have and are willing to forgive any mistakes if we see them trying their best. We accept that children learn things differently, and some take more time to learn the basics. Don't earthly parents brag about their 3-year-old's drawings, even if the drawing is just a stick man with all the proportions wrong? Would we show the 3-year-old a Van Gogh painting and tell them how bad their drawing is in comparison? Of course not. Rather, we value the effort of the child and see their potential. We try to guide them as best we can, so they can be their best. We encourage growth and are excited to be by their side, even though they stumble and fail on their way there.

God mirrors our relationship with our children in His relationship with us. He does not expect us to know and understand everything at once or to never make any mistakes. He is happy with every progress we make towards becoming a good and productive person. He never expects more of us than is possible for us to be or do. And His advice along the way is to direct our path as a parent does a child, not to destroy us with condemnation and critique.

Christ tried to fight the lies about God by proving and showing that this is not how God is at all. Giving parable after parable showing God as a kind, forgiving God who loves mankind as His own children was meant to break the image Satan had created of God through religious influencers. Even to Moses, God pointed out these lies by claiming to be: *"merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."* But a God that only forgives and don't punishes is not a good God because that would mean He would allow abusers to abuse, perpetrators to damage without retaliation making Him a bad God to victims, and so God added: *"and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."* (Exo.34:6-7)

Let's compare it with an earthly father who has two sons. If one repeatedly harms the other and the father does nothing, the father is not good towards the afflicted son. A good father would not allow his love for the bad son to make him forget his love and duty towards the afflicted son.

Thus, it is with God as well. He is a good God because He does judge and because He holds others and us accountable. This is in part why we can trust Him to be fair and good. If he only forgave and never punished, God would not be perfect.

We can exaggerate His judgments and harm ourselves in the process, breaking the bond between us and God. However, God has said that if we do sin and want rehabilitation, He is forgiving and ready to receive us without judgment. He gave His son for our ransom. He took our punishment so that we could have His reward. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17)

If we want to use God's mercy as permission to do harm and evil, to continue to destroy, He will punish us not to gratify His "hate for us" but because it is right that He does. Whenever someone harms someone, there is a victim that God is equally responsible for. God is not unreasonable, but He asks us

to turn from our ways with His help. Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5) We need to stop the harm, or paradise will not be paradise.

Many of the leading Jews in Christ's day had made God into a dictator, and Christ had to really work on people's attitudes.

You cannot trust someone you feel is against you or out to get you. And so, Satan would like Christians to think God is out to get them, for then our love for Him is choked by our fear. We will avoid him instead of coming to Him for help. We will cover up our crimes, blaming others instead of confessing them. Even blaming God. We are playing a game of defense with the one who wants to help us rehabilitate.

We are fighting our ally instead of the true enemy that caused us to fall in the first place.

Tragically, the ones who struggle with trust issues with God are those who are damaged and need Him the most. Long-term trauma survivors have learned to distrust authority figures, and God is an authority figure. Children with absent parents or who have been neglected might feel God will abandon them too. Those who have had severe unfair punishments as children, made to take blame that is not theirs, might fear God is doing it too. Their whole religious service is about trying to avoid hell. A child who is picked on a lot, constantly criticized will easily think God is picking on every little aspect of their lives, judging them, and criticizing them. A sexually abused person might be inclined to believe that God's love is harmful and selfish. A child who is told they're worthless will feel God thinks they are worthless too. We project our trauma into our relationship with God. And those with good and loving parents might understand God's love perfectly and yet not understand trauma survivors' toxic God image or know how to meet them with the right words. Because trauma survivors struggle with authority figures, trusting God is work, and it does not come naturally. Satan is kicking the weak while they are down, using God's name. We are not to condemn those who struggle but: *"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters" "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."* (Rom.14:1; Rom.15:1-2)

Among Satan's biggest attacks on God and us is to create dysfunctional families. By destroying families, he succeeds in teaching children that God is bad and selfish. The impressions given to children in their earliest years will follow them throughout life, and even if they become Christians, in times of triggers, their faith in God might often falter when they need Him the most.

Nothing harms a child's future relationship with God more than toxic, absent, or abusive parents or a father who leaves them.

If you are a trauma victim or trying to help one, trusting God is a key challenge. Education on God's love for mankind, for those failing and struggling, is important. A trauma survivor fears punishment because, in the past, it often came randomly, unprovoked, and was severe. It is important to understand that the one who comes to God will not be met with condemnation but with the offer of salvation.

If you come to Him wishing for support to continue harming others, however, you might have a reason to fear. But even then, God will first try to convince you to choose another path.

God says He is “long-suffering” meaning He does not have a short temper. He does not make decisions based on temporary anger, like many abusers do with their victims. He will always offer grace if He can; He wants people to turn from their ways and not die.

“For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Eze 18:32)

God will always offer the chance of salvation before any punishment. Usually several times. God sometimes knows it takes time for us to understand ourselves and others correctly, and so He often comes repeatedly with the offer of salvation throughout someone's life. Christ said on the cross:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk.23:34)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Joh 3:16-17).

This might be Christian A-B-C for a mentally healthy person, but not always for a childhood trauma survivor. Comprehending these words without worry can be hard; the body is alarmed even if the head is not.

The worst king in Judah's history, Manasseh, was so bad that God could not save Jerusalem because of his influence. The city had become so overthrown by sin and misery that God saw it best to allow other nations to judge it. The city was conquered, and the people spread. Yet, after causing much of the disharmony and falling away, when Manasseh was in prison in Babylon, he suddenly understood how wrong he had been.

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God” (2.Cor.33:12-13)

God could not save the city, for they did not turn from their ways, but He did meet Manasseh with compassion, despite everything.

God's love is extreme, it is so extreme that people call Him unfair for not judging harder and sooner. When He judges, they still call Him unfair because they do not wish to be judged themselves. God is fair because all He asks for is accountability and a desire to change.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1Jn 2:1-2).

If you are a Christian trauma survivor, you may struggle to find healing if you have done the unfortunate and given God a role in your trauma-play. Know that God is not out to get you because He finds pleasure in punishing and humiliating you like your perpetrator did; instead, God will always meet you with the offer of help, assistance, and salvation. God does not want to punish; He wants to save.

If He can't save, He is forced to punish. But He is long-suffering, He will try to reach you repeatedly. Therefore, run to God as if He is your ally, as if He is your safe place, and not as someone you need protection from.

Don't listen to your doubts or Satan's insinuation that God does not wish you well. He does. Or that God somehow makes your life hard for His own pleasure.

Man will fail us; they will make mistakes. If we rely on people to be strong for us, we will fall when they fall.

God is perfect; everything He does is perfect. We rely on Him because He does not change. "For I *am* the LORD, I change not" (Mal.3:6) There is safety in knowing this. His standard does not change, His righteousness does not change. We know for certain where we have him. Society changes, the world's morals change, and definitions change, but with God, you know what you get. His character does not change.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13: 8.

Many liberal Christians want to change God with the ever-changing society, not understanding how harmful it is to those who are damaged by the world's standards. The morality of the world is corrupt, selfish, and unrighteous. Comparing God with the morals of the world creates an unsafe place for a survivor. God becomes yet again the defender of the evildoers and not the hero of the subdued.

For a good number of childhood trauma survivors, the ever-changing moods of authority figures or other children caused a lot of fear and harm. Even at good times, when their bullies or perpetrators acted friendly and kind, they could not relax or enjoy themselves because they were worried about when the mood would change. Their fears might even be relieved, as anticipating can be just as hard as the acts they are anticipating.

This is why many victims don't leave their perpetrator. The anticipation of evil from an unknown person seems scarier than suffering abuse from a known person.

Translated into a relationship with God, even the good times can cause worry and fear for the survivor. Understand that God does not change who He is; He is not good one day and evil the next. He is not Ying Yang; this can be healing knowledge for a victim.

"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Numbers 23:19)

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (Isaiah 40:28)

Some Christians get weary of doing good when everyone else is self-pleasing, but how terrifying would it be if God got weary of doing good? But He does not. He knows our lives depend on His long-suffering, and He values our lives.

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

All sin is built upon distrust of God. Notice it yourself in your own spiritual life. When do you fail? When your trust in God's care and love for you is questioned. When you question if what God asks of you is going to cost you something better, that He is unreasonable, or that the reward in the Bible is a lie?

The word “faith” is used a lot in the gospel. The word “faith” is the same word that means trust. The faith chapter in Hebrew 11 is not about the patriarchs thinking about a belief in their heads; rather, it is about the patriarchs trusting God. Because Abraham trusted God, he went to Canaan. Because Noah trusted God, he built the ark that saved him and his family. They trusted God's word to be true and acted upon that trust, knowing whatever God asked of them was for their benefit. That God wanted the best for them.

If Eve had this trust standing before the tree of knowledge of good and evil, she would have replied to the serpent: “I trust God wishes me well; if He forbids me eating from this tree, it is because He loves me, and so I won’t”. Everything could have stopped right there, with her trust in God.

We stand and fall on the trust issue as well. If we trust that God loves us and wishes us well, we will follow His lead. We will find safety. We can replace the fear response with a love-based response.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Psa 91:1-4).

Survivors make a lot of their decisions based on “what ifs,” more so than those who have had a calmer and easier life growing up. Trusting God can pull them and us out of the “trying to save ourselves—they or us” mode and help us find mental peace.

For those victims that do not get justice in the world, it will destroy them from the inside.

Knowing there is a God who sees and knows the truth can give that desired acknowledgment of value and comfort needed to continue. Knowing justice will come, even if not immediately, at some point. Calmly, putting this burden in God's hands can help us let go. Knowing someone knows and cares can be life-changing for any survivor.

“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,

And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You” (Psalm 86:5)

Trusting God will help release a victim from victimhood, as they no longer feel they are under threat or danger. The realization that God cares about them and will watch over them and protect them can help against constant stress and worry. God knows the many illnesses and mental challenges that come from constant inner stress, and his solution to sin as well as our bodily stress is trusting in Him. This is God's cure for all our problems. When we trust someone, we act on that trust, and those acts are our medicine.

It has a healing effect and brings the mind back to sanity and health. We don't have to struggle to be seen or heard to get justice anymore; we can get it from God and the certainty that He cares and has the power to help if we need it. *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1.Jhn 5:4)*

Although finding peace in trusting God can be hard for trauma victims, it makes all the difference to get there, to get strength to not pay trauma forward, and to conquer personal destructive sin.

No sin can be conquered without trusting in God. Distrust is the origin of sin; trust is the victory over sin. It is the most powerful relationship we can enter into, and it leads anyone back into freedom in the Lord.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jer 17:7-8).

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”. (Joh 6:37)

Satan leads many to believe they are not good enough for God. That because of something they have done or something that has happened to them, they are unfit for God. God does not create such limitations. Jesus said:

“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mar.2:17)

God is the great physician, and He is not expecting us to be perfect before coming to Him. He knows we need help to change, and so we desperately need to come to Him as we are, with all our faults and blemishes. Satan has hindered many from coming to God with the lie that they must wait until they have their lives together and have conquered their sin first. It can seem as if it is of God and the Holy Spirit because Satan can use God's standards and laws to tell us to follow before coming to God. It does not matter what standard Satan uses, even God's, because he knows if we try to perfect ourselves before going to God, we will fail and never go. If we think we must have conquered all our sins before God receives us, we will never come to God because it cannot be done. Thus, many Christians go on Satan's errand while seemingly preaching the truth. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were*

yet sinners, Christ died for us. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom.5:8-11)

We come to God while still sinning and struggling with our faults because we cannot grow and become free without His help. God knows this, so He tells us to come as we are and not try to fix things on our own.

You would not wait until you are well again before going to the hospital, but you go there when you are sick to get healing. It is the same with God. We are supposed to come to Him with our issues, so He can help us heal.

Jesus illustrated this perfectly by assigning a woman perceived as a sinner—a former demon-possessed woman—as the first person to share the gospel of His resurrection. She came to Him; she was healed, and she was given trust. She was a scorned woman. Just like Tamar and Rehab, whom God defended and protected. Even for many of the male antiheroes in the Bible, God could lead them to do great good.

When Jacob saw in his dream a ladder reaching all the way to heaven, he had just wronged his brother and father. He had lied, stolen, and deceived. He did it because his father had favored his brother. Jacob’s journey to recover from his sin started with connecting with heaven.

In the story of Jacob, it says about his father: “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison” (Gen.25:28) But God said: “*Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob*” (Mal.1:2). God evaluates every person himself. And those who reject or even hurt us do not necessarily represent Christ in that action.

The same was true of many hated and despised people whom God loved. Like Zacchaeus, Matthew, and many others.

Trust that God is on your side, regardless of what has happened, and wishes to help you heal and start over.

He is not those people who hurt you; they did not represent Him or His expression of authority. God looks to your heart and is not persuaded by anyone in his opinion of you. He does not measure a man or a woman by gossip and slander.

God does not despise us because we are weak and wounded. He knows the wounded are even more likely to ask for help. While those who flatter themselves as strong choose to walk in their own strength.

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (Isaiah 40:29).

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7)

Jesus did not lie when He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt.11:28)

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. (Rom.8:26)

Trust in God is the true rest; it is the only real rest that exists and can possibly be obtained by man.

Trusting God and acting on that trust is the kingdom of Christ within us. Trust in God is paradise restored.

Why He allows difficulties.

- *Many fear trusting God because they do not understand why God allows what has happened or may happen to us.*
- *Understanding God's response to sin and those afflicted can help us see that God is on our side for good.*
- Does our scar tell us God did not care, or are they a witness that God cares even more than we do?

A trauma survivor dreads the unexpected. The fear of being in a situation over which we have no control can cause us to avoid many confrontations but also cause us to doubt that God is in complete control. This induces us to live a life in fear to feel control, even though living like this only gives us little control and much misery. Many survivors of trauma cling to their fears, feeling that their alertness somehow protects them from danger. This happens at the cost of peace and happiness.

In faith, the apostle Paul says: “God is faithful, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it” (1.Cor.10:12-14).

What happens to us and how we handle it are not always the same for everyone. Some experience minor traumas but are saved from what they feared. Even if they pray and God helps them, they continue to be afraid. Constantly, they are tortured by the thought of “what if it happens again” and they lose the fight this time? They experienced something difficult, but God made a way out, yet they did not endure it. This is because some fear what could have happened and what can happen, as if that is what happened. And the trauma is built around that, and they do not find peace in their deliverance. In this way, God can seem untrustworthy rather than trustworthy, and they are determined to save themselves from a similar encounter, limiting their life and freedom in the process.

Besides those struggling who escaped what they feared, there are many who did not escape the bad situation without getting severely wounded. Many have experienced things that have made them lose trust that God is in control. For many survivors of trauma, bad things did happen, and although they are now out of it, they cannot break free from the fear of it happening again.

With our freedom in life comes the chance of encountering people who sin. Just like we have sinned and others have suffered consequences for that. With all choices comes risk, and taking risks is part of our freedom. With risk comes the chance of getting hurt.

God lets people choose to sin for multiple reasons. The first is that to be able to destroy sin and sinners, we must understand why God must destroy them. He cannot eradicate it without our willingness to let it go, or else a future society will be forced-based, and we will be subdued while living in it. Creating a paradise for mankind requires man to willingly give up sin. If we are not willing to do that, we will not be free even in His paradise. He can destroy all humans, but God wants to save humans and give us a future. Thus, he needs us to understand why sin is wrong.

If no one suffers any negative consequences for others' selfishness and evil, there is nothing to

condemn or expose. The consequences themselves even chastise the transgressor. Sin is forbidden in God's paradise because it does so much damage that everyone will be afflicted by it. All you need is one sinner to create misery and stress that afflict an entire family and neighborhood. If God made it impossible, in a world of sin, for people to be afflicted by sin, there would be no argument against sin. If someone could hit another repeatedly every day without leaving them physically and mentally harmed, the world would still not be a good place. Because the man who hits is still a rotten person without good character development. Even if it does not hurt the other, the man who hits is still selfish and unkind in the heart. Even without physical harm, there will be mental harm. And if God removes both harms, man is no longer a thinking, processing, free individual who can evaluate right from wrong himself. Rather, he will be a puppet, not understanding anything happening; logic is gone, reason is gone, and all we will be is just a product of instinct and desire. It is not an intellectual society, nor is it freedom. No one can lead or be led. God loves intelligence. He created man to be intelligent. He is not threatened by intelligence, as the serpent told Eve in the Garden of Eden; rather, God encourages it. If a man harms and sees the harm he causes, if he is a conscious man, he will regret and rethink his behavior and his emotions and try to change.

God did not want mankind to learn to be good this way, which is why he forbade Eve from knowing the result of "the tree of good and evil". Notice, the forbidden knowledge was not just evil, but also "good". There is a good knowledge God did not want man to experience, which likely seemed strange to Eve at the time. This good knowledge involves understanding how goodness is when beholding evil. Meaning when you get acquainted with awful behavior, you understand and appreciate good behavior differently. The second is the good knowledge that follows bad knowledge. We might try to save someone from experiencing something harmful that we have experienced. It is a good deed, but the knowledge was received from something bad. When people look at the world and say there is still a lot of good in it, that good usually follows something destructive or something bad first. Yes, a group may gather money to help the poor. But this good deed would not be needed if poverty did not happen first. Poverty is usually the result of bad leadership in a country. Corruption, war, and collective trauma are why people starve in the first place. So, when we admire the goodness of those handing out food rations, it is the type of goodness that is born because of acts of sin.

So, we become seemingly good, and we appreciate the good more because of the existence of bad things. This is not God's paradise. God's paradise is the existence of goodness without evil.

Now that sin has entered the world, God cannot remove the consequences of sin because it is the only thing that holds people back from doing even more harm, and these consequences can inspire them to act differently.

To make a bold example in the Cold War between Russia and the USA. No country wants to use nuclear weapons against another, not necessarily because they are good, but because they know they might get a bomb in return. Fear of retaliation holds men partly in check. A woman might wish to kill her neighbor for hitting her cat with his car, but knowing she will spend a lifetime in jail, she keeps her rage in check. It would be better if she loved her neighbor as God wanted, and that kept her from wanting to harm him; that is the ultimate best. But if the love is not there, fear of consequences can prevent her from harming him instead. Some people choose not to bully others for the sole reason they fear being bullied in return, not because they empathize with being bullied. In a world full of bad

people who do not listen to their conscience, fear of punishment can pacify their evil rampage. Thus, even God has in Bible history made evil people without a conscience fear Him to prevent them from doing more harm, just like governmental authorities do. It is not the ultimate and best way to control people, but occasionally, it is necessary when people do not reason.

Many thieves do not steal because they fear punishment. The fear of consequences and retaliation forces even you to reconsider doing something wrong. Shame has long been considered a bad thing in popular society. What they fail to understand is the strong influence shame has on keeping people from harming others and themselves. Shame can be a good force for keeping the sinner under control. There is, of course, misplaced shame, but shame placed correctly upon the one who harms rather than the victim can prevent them from continuing or doing the same to others. A grown person desiring to watch the molestation of a child on their computer should feel shame, even if they are not caught. It will keep him from acting out his fantasy. A man who cheats on his wife should feel shame. If people do not feel any form of shame when doing something wrong, they will usually escalate and do even worse. Shameless people are dangerous.

If God removes all consequences and marks left on our body and soul from sinful acts, then He is taking away the little humanity has left to chastise themselves into becoming more compassionate human beings. If we see the suffering caused by someone's actions, we are less inclined to find it funny or worth it to do the same. Our scars train us to think differently, but they are also a living organic record God will use on judgment day against everyone who did not repent from their harmful ways.

Every scar afflicted upon us because of someone else's sin, is evidence in the court of heaven of why sin is bad and cannot be continuously permitted on the earth. Every damage down to the cellular level—every damage to the brain, to the heart, on the nervous system, in the DNA—is God's testimony against sin and the existence of it. And He will use the recorded evidence in our bodies as His argument to destroy sin and end the suffering here on earth. We are living recorders; our bodies are witnesses for God. He is going to use it to save us. Just like we would in a court of law here on earth, but here we only recognize some damage. God sees all the damage, all the chain reactions caused by one sin. A rapist does not afflict just their victim and their family. But the whole neighborhood, the whole town, all the relatives. They are all scared by the fear and harmed by the stress the perpetrator has created in their society. God judges with a far greater perspective than earthly courts do. God does it for the future of mankind and our home, the earth.

For those who are living a happy, successful life, God also lets them have the fruits of their good labors. If God takes from them the benefit of doing good and working hard, they will lose motivation to do good, innovate, and bring society forward. If their hard work will not benefit their children and grandchildren, why should they try at all? Just as bad consequences keep someone from doing something wrong, the hope of reward can help someone choose to do something right. It is focusing on opportunities rather than limitations. Being inspired to do good by good results, rather than focusing on not doing wrong out of fear of punishment. The first will be happier and feel freer, while the other will feel oppressed. So being free is not so much tied to one's situation as to where our focus is. And so, God will not take the blessings from honest, hard-working people and give them to those who have lived selfishly in self-pleasure and sin. This is why God allows consequences to continue down into generations, because it too is a witness of good and bad. Stopping generational consequences

would mean hiding the cause and effect of people's choices in the long term (Exo.20:5-6). A good example is communistic and socialistic countries, where they try to eradicate this cause and effect, and the result in society is less innovation and economic growth, which is why most socialistic-structured countries succumb after a longer period of time. The Bible, both the New Testament and the Old Testament, is clear that God expects those who are successful to help their fellow men who are not. Usually, those who struggle have experienced family and community trauma, and victim-blaming is not going to help them. They need a helping hand to get back on their feet. God expects those with fortunes to help those who don't have ways to help themselves and to have compassion on them, but He won't stop people who are working hard from succeeding and eradicating the long-term changes life choices have. This would be hiding and covering the consequences of sin and crime, and taking the courage away from those who try to do the right thing. So, God wants us to have compassion and help those who have fallen, but He doesn't remove cause and effect so that the difference between good and bad choices cannot be distinguished anymore.

Good people who work hard and love their children will reap the blessings of their good choices. Their children and grandchildren will be healthier and happier, just like bad parents afflict their issues upon their children and grandchildren. Sin is generational because children often repeat their parents' mistakes. Over time, the effects of sin and good choices can be seen for hundreds, even thousands, of years. People today usually only care about today, but God looks at even these generational effects when judging against the existence of sin. The universe must see the long-term effects of sin to understand sin rightly and trust God's solution. Therefore, God does not remove cause and effect. God has a greater mission, to bring peace and harmony back to earth and the universe. It cannot be done by hiding the truth about the damage sin creates. If God had hid the long-term effects by removing all consequences, He would be deceiving both humans and angels. God has no other choice if He wants to eradicate sin; He must expose it and let its harm come to light. To expose it, both mankind, heaven, and any other planets must be allowed to see cause and effect, and God cannot tamper with the evidence. Our planet is a "spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1.Cor.4:9).

God has promised that although our decisions and choices might get us into trouble, He will not allow any of His children who come to Him for help to be abandoned in the hands of evil or trapped within a generational cycle if we wish to be free. He will find an escape or a way out. He will help. If we step out of a generational cycle and do good, we become witnesses to the effect of turning to God and how easily a curse can be broken.

If our expectations of God are that He will clear every path we walk from difficulties, we harm only ourselves. We lose trust in God that way. God helps us through life's struggles and difficulties, making a way for us, but He cannot at this point create paradise on earth. Not because He does not wish us well, but because it would not be a paradise if we continued as before. He can remove all illness, death, and poverty, and it would still not be paradise because man would use his luxury and spare time to do even more harm. God would have to run after man and constantly clean up his mess like a foolish servant, and mankind would never improve.

The Bible teaches us that wealth does not equal being good. In the cities that were so ungodly that God had to destroy them it was said: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters..." (Ezek.16:49) The place the city lied was compared to Garden of Eden: "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan,

that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD..." (Gen.13:10)

You can have plenty, be healthy, and still have an evil disposition. Where there is no gratitude, there is no satisfaction. That is why Satan rebelled in heaven. The moment he stopped being grateful for all he had, he discovered dissatisfaction and started lying, stealing, and killing to achieve his goals.

Happiness is not and can never be achieved through selfish gratification. It is impossible. For a long time, we have seen celebrities who seem to have it all: fame, money, properties, and influence, yet they succumb to mental illness, drugs, and suicide. At the end of the day, it is what is in the heart that matters, not what is in your hand.

For the many Bible critics who claim God is the cause of all misery if He does not remove all the consequences of sin, they fail to see that if God is to remove it, He must remove all mankind with it. Because we are the ones doing it. Therefore, it is physically impossible for God to create paradise on earth if man is unwilling to change his ways. Either he has to remove sin by removing man, or he has to remove sin from inside the heart of mankind. These are God's only two options.

To create a paradise, all mankind must agree not to sin, and they won't do it. They are busy creating laws that justify sin and refuse to see cause and effect in the bigger picture. They hate God and love sin. The law in society is focused on self-gratification and short-term solutions. Thus, the only way to judge us is for the universe to see why sin is bad and how it harms.

God did not want the universe to have to gain this knowledge, but because He was not trusted because of Satan's false accusations and His moral law was doubted, He had to allow sin to manifest itself so that we could choose it away willingly. In the end, He will separate those who want Him to remove sin from those who wish to legalize it, saving only those who have repented.

When God creates thinking beings, He is bound to also give those beings space to think. If not, God creates a thinking being inside a bodily and social prison. What is the point of allowing someone the ability to reason only to forbid it? To give people free will for the purpose of forcing it? It is a contradiction. Our ability to reason is itself evidence of who God is, and that intelligence is not a threat to him.

You cannot create intelligent beings and then stop them from thinking and evaluating. Either God does not create intelligent beings, or He creates them and must give them the freedom of choice and reason.

Paradise can never be obtained by force. Paradise is not paradise for anyone forced to live by its principles. Thus, paradise can only be obtained through choice and understanding. For us to understand, we need to see cause and effect. We are in the middle of a moral war zone. Unfortunately, this means people will experience bad things in life; they will be scared and hurt by their actions, by their family's actions, and by the actions of others.

God is against all sin. He tells people not to sin, or there will be consequences. But He does not allow people to sin and then remove the evidence—the consequence of selfish choices. There is no way to create peace when people's gratification is at others' expense. It does not have to be an individual problem; it can be a greater societal problem. The western world has plenty because they are exploiting workers in foreign lands. Stealing even the resources from that land. The unspoken policy behind this is

that plenty should be gained without a personal effort to obtain it. One does the hard work, and the other enjoys the fruit of that work. This is part of the unfairness of the world. God's principles do not work with unfairness. He could let it rain "manna" upon the badly treated workers, so they would not have to starve, but how would that solve the sin behind their condition? Would God not just legitimize the exploitation by compensating their pay? Rather, God wants us to take responsibility for our actions and stop greedy exploitation. The heart of the exploiter is the problem, not just the result of it. Thus, it is with all kinds of sins. God does not want us to constantly fix what we break; rather, He wants us to stop breaking things.

Jesus said: "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat 9:13) Sacrifice represented coming and asking for forgiveness. Mercy means doing the right thing. And so Jesus is here saying that it is better repenting and doing mercy, then doing the wrong thing and then asking God for forgiveness.

Jesus tells them to go learn the meaning of this, indicating that they found piety in pleading Gods for mercy more so then actually doing good.

The point was made in the Old Testament as well. God said: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa 1:4.11.17)

He places the problem in our hearts, not in the consequences. The consequences of our actions are evidence of what is in the heart; thus, the problem of eradicating sin is to start where the sin is born.

Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man `unclean'" (Matt.15:11) Sin almost always comes from a selfish disposition.

James wrote: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14-15)

God's repeated plea is to allow Him to move and change our hearts: "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." (Deut.30:6) Loving God means loving who He is and what He stands for and being inspired by that. When you worship God and behold Him with admiration and love, your eyes are drawn from yourself to something greater, and it changes you. If your admiration is for worldly influencers, pop stars, movie stars, sports heroes, or fictional characters who all act with a selfish disposition, we will be inspired to do the same. We will often find ourselves loving those who do not love us back. Thus, to be more like those we admire, we must do what they do, be selfish, and desire others' admiration. The rapid increase in narcissistic expression in the world is due to people

admiring narcissists and copying their behavior in the pursuit of happiness.

When we behold God and admire Him, we are inspired by someone with greater moral and character traits, and his self-sacrificing love for us inspires us to want to be more like Him. It will make us better people. Who we admire and worship are the ones who influence our hearts and who we are. No one is influenced by anyone. Even atheists who reject God are not free from the influence of others. No man is completely original in his expressions and choices; everyone is inspired by, influenced by, or admires someone who becomes their example. Usually, there are multiple people we take inspiration from when we form our path in life. Not wanting to believe in God, they are forced to choose someone or something to admire in God's place. Whatever they choose, they will become more alike. Although people would like to think they are independent, we are not. Therefore, who we are and become is tied to who we are inspired by. God asks us to be inspired by Him to be more like Him so that we can be good people. Beholding God, worshiping God, and trusting God therefore change our hearts. Those Christians who fear God and hell and use that as their motivation as Christians are not going to have their hearts changed. We need to admire and love to be able to and inspired to reflect the one we behold. Thus, in God's law, if kept, it represents paradise. God forbids the idolization of man, animals, and fictional characters so that man's hearts are not scattered and inspired by faulty images, bringing themselves into a morally degrading state. (Rom.1:22-32) The ones we look up to are the ones whose moral laws we live by. If it is a man or a fictional character created by a person, it will have a selfish disposition behind the moral, and thus we end up following a faulty standard. So, in God's law, He asked us to love Him as our only God and moral influencer. When we worship God, it is for our own good. We are lifted by it; we are lifted to a higher moral intellect and standard. By elevating God in our hearts, we elevate our hearts with Him. Jesus said: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30)

Thus, even God asking for our worship is for our growth and benefit. When we love God, we become more like Him.

When there is sin in the world, the fruit of sin will manifest, and we will be inflicted. Some less than others. The amount of affliction someone suffers is not always tied to their sin. Some have little tribulations in their lives, and they have not done something specific to deserve the easy life; they are just in a good place. In some countries, the land was built by good, morally strong Christian men and women, and the rebellious and immoral descendants are still harvesting the peace from their work. It will not last, as shifting behavior will also shift circumstances for the next generation. The result of either good or bad politics and societal changes does not manifest as well in the generation that created the change but in their children's and grandchildren's. Cause and effect are not always immediate.

We harvest what our ancestors sow, even if it's not our sin. If they made countless poor decisions, we are likely to continue them and even suffer from theirs. This is part of what God allows: for people to understand cause and effect and change their ways willingly.

No matter how or why we are in a difficult or good situation, God has promised and wants us to trust Him that if we come to Him in our troubles, He will help us. He is always present. Despite God's having to allow the consequences of sin to manifest themselves to judge the guilty and eradicate sin, He

will not abandon someone who cries for His help. When someone loses hope, their progress is over. No matter what has happened or what we or our ancestors have done, giving mankind “hope” is the only way to inspire us to change. This is why God says in the Bible that regardless of what the past is, He can still give us a future.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity..” (Jer 29:11-14)

There is a chance to “turn around,” and God will forgive us and help us aspire to a new and more successful life. He can turn our weaknesses into strengths. He can take victims and make them warriors for good.

This is our trust and safety:

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble;

I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” (Psalm 50:15)

“I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,

And I am saved from my enemies” (2.Sam.22:4).

“In my distress I called upon the Lord,

And cried to my God for help;

He heard my voice out of His temple,

And my cry for help before Him came into His ears” (Psalm 18:6)

“He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;

I will rescue him and honor him” (Psalm 91:15)

Spice everything that happens; spice cause and effect; spice sin in the world; God is willing to put all that behind you and save you anyway. This is the hope and power that we need to cling to when we are stuck, and it even seems deserving. In the end, God is our Father and life-giver. And just like a father is willing to give his sons and daughters new chances when they mess up, so is God. Without love and hope, there is no driving force to bring us forward.

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?

Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me” (Isaiah 49:15-17)

He also comes to the aid of those who do not call upon him:

“I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;

I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ (Isa.65:1)

God has promised to help those that come to Him, and although we might not see the deliverance straight away, we can know that since we gave Him our difficulties, God is already working for our good.

Jesus said: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Mat 10:29-31).

Don’t put God in a difficult position to save you.

There is one situation that can be a difficult place for God to help you in. We must not be in that place when we cry for His intervention.

If we have blood on our hands yet, pray for Him to punish our enemies.

If we have committed great injustice, yet wish God to judge our neighbor. Here, we put God in an impossible situation. How can He save us “from the hands of the wicked” if we ourselves commit wickedness? We therefore need to convert and stand against our wickedness, or God will be deemed unfair if He helps us. Some may pray for Him to punish us or give us the consequences of our actions as well. To give a rough example, if someone just robbed and harmed someone and the police are about to find them, should God intervene and save them from being caught? If you just spread lies about someone and harmed their chances, can you pray not to be exposed? Obviously, God needs to be fair for the sake of the victim and their family before the perpetrator. In the USA, it is not unusual to pray before a competitive sport, yet if both sides pray to God to help them win, it is not something God can get involved in. He loves both sides equally and doesn’t offer to help people cheat in games.

God must follow His own justice system in everything. When Joshua was about to fight the battle of Jericho, he did it at God's command, not out of personal desire. When the captain of the Lord's angel army came to assist Joshua's army, Joshua asked: “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” (Jos.5:13) And the Captain of the Lords army answered “Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come” (Jos.5:13-14). God does not work according to our personal or even our country's justice system, but according to His own. He represents the courts in heaven and is true to them. That is partly why He is trustworthy. He does not accept bribes and is not moved by flattery. He evaluates everyone against a set standard.

Even if you are wronged according to God's justice system, God might say you ought to forgive that person as you yourselves have been forgiven a similar transgression, and so He might not help you punish them if God just showed you mercy for the same thing. Jesus explained this situation in the

parable of the unforgiving servant. It is a story about how a man was in financial debt and faced prison, but then his employee had compassion for him and deleted his debts. Then the man goes out and ruthlessly demands that another who owed him money must pay, and when the other pleads with him, he has no compassion for him and has him put in prison. Christ said we cannot expect God to help when we are behaving this way. (Matt.18:21-35) That should make sense. If you steal from your neighbor and are forgiven by him and God, and another neighbor steals from you, and you tell God to punish him and show no mercy to him, God might not want to side with you.

Jesus helped many who were suppressed, yet when a man came and asked Him to take sides in an inheritance struggle, He declined. "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:13-21) We cannot expect God to intervene in all situations to our benefit. He has many children He must consider, not just us. We look at things from our perspective; God looks from everyone's perspective.

Many of the disciples might have thought God destroying Paul would be a good thing, as he persecuted, tortured, and made their lives impossible. God knew Paul's heart and knew He could save him and have him help them instead. Jesus had taught them to pray for their enemies, and many of the disciples probably did pray for Paul's conversion rather than his destruction. So, instead of destroying Paul, Christ managed to convert him and give him his new name and life. Paul then became a spiritual soldier on the frontier, helping Christ's followers and encouraging them in dark times. To this day, long after his passing, his letters comfort Christians about to give up. To persecuted Christians, crushing Paul might seem like the best option, but God, seeing a greater picture, chose a different approach to the problem.

God does not want us to give up on people too quickly, even if they wrong us. If there is still a chance to save them, God will choose that first. He wants us to value people's lives to a greater degree and not judge too quickly, easily, or harshly. God has said He is "slow to wrath" and "overbearing," and so we cannot pray for God to be impulsively vengeful instead. Our prayers do not change His character traits. A confrontation arose between Christ and his disciples, who were offended at a wrong done towards God and themselves: "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. or the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village" (Luk.9:54-56)

God is not acquitting anyone of their evil without atonement, but He will try all He can to save them if it is possible.

This might seem brutal to the one who is wronged, but, in this knowledge, lies the understanding and hope that God does the same for us when someone accuses us. He does not give up on us lightly. Countless trauma survivors harm others and need grace for themselves. God ask us to try and bless those that hurt us before cursing them. Especially in the little things in life. Being worked up to anger against each other over little thoughtless offenses and wanting great recompense is not something we can expect God to help us do. Gods' mercy is part of His greatness. If we are to reflect His image to others, we need to have room to offer people some grace. Sometimes if we pray God to fight our

enemies, He will use time. He will try to speak to their conscience, persuade them, warn them before acting too harshly. This demands our patience and trust in God even when things seem to take time.

On the other side, if we are condemned for our own sin, or being punished for our own crimes, God cannot always intervene on our behalf as He must be fair to those we have harmed as well.

Make sure your hands are clean or that you have tried to make amends for your own faults before praying for deliverance from your enemies.

“When your dread comes like a storm

And your calamity comes like a whirlwind,

When distress and anguish come upon you.

“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;

They will seek me diligently but they will not find me,

Because they hated knowledge

And did not choose the fear of the Lord” (Pro.1: 28-29)

“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isa 1:15).

Remember, God is long suffering; He gives many chances. Every so often He is forced to let us suffer the consequences of our actions because of the afflicted who demand justice. But still, God will intervene to help us when we cry to Him in honest regret.

He might forgive us despite our transgressors wanting God to destroy us.

This is why Christ said: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Mat 6:14)

Demanding justice and God's intervention while not wishing to give others justice and help places God in a difficult situation where we might not experience the help we desire.

Notice that when the Samaritan village did not receive Christ and the apostles, they went to another place. They did not try to force themselves on people who rejected them.

Christ advised His people not to stay in abusive situations but rather to move. “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another” (Matt.10:23)

God sometimes waiting to punish our transgressors does not mean we are supposed to stay in harm's way. Let God deal with them, whether to save or judge. Go find peace somewhere else. Trust God to take care of justice, unless it is a crime that should be reported to the government. If it is not something the government can't do, then be patient and place yourself out of harm's way while waiting for justice.

Too much tolerance.

With victims of long-term abuse, it can go both ways. Either they want God to judge people too quickly because they fear any traits that remind them of their abuse, or their tolerance for evil is too high. With God's mercy and law, there is a perfect balance, but within our hearts, that is not always the case. We can judge too harshly, like in the parable of the unforgiving servant, but we can also have an exaggerated mercy. Paul normally preached mercy, as he had received such great mercy himself. However, in his letter to the church in Corinth, he said their mercy was misplaced and told them to judge the injustice that had happened there.

Likewise, trauma victims' "mercy compass" might be wrongly adjusted. They can expect God to demand more of them than He does, thinking they honor God by staying in severe abuse at the expense of all their strength.

Using scripture in the wrong situation continually happens. Those who expect God to support them against everyone in everything and those who think God takes pleasure in their suffering and dare not ask for even minimal help are both wrong.

If you, as a victim, have learned you do not deserve basic human rights, "do not judge" and "show mercy" are not to be used against your release from suppression. If Scripture is not placed in the right setting, it becomes a lie.

Satan is an expert on this, and when trying to tempt Christ in the wilderness, he used scripture to try to distress and provoke Christ into harming Himself.

Satan can use scripture to take away the freedom and courage of a victim, making them think God wants them to accept repeated abuse and mistreatment. That God's love for their abuser and transgressor is greater than God's love for them. This is not hard for a childhood trauma victim to believe, as they have learned throughout childhood that their needs are not relevant and that their health and happiness are sacrificed for the selfishness of their parents or peers.

Be alert, therefore, that none of Christ's words should be used to favor an abuser over or at the expense of its victim. The parable of the unforgiving servant is the story of a man in need of forgiveness who becomes abusive. He is punished for his behavior. This cannot be used to force a victim to stay in an abusive relationship; it is an entirely different situation.

Everything must be seen in context. If your neighbor borrowed your toolbox and some tools are missing, perhaps a little forgiveness is the right response rather than creating a war to get repaid.

Here Christ's words of not judging and being merciful are very rightly placed.

For victims who are being destroyed for everyday they suffer, telling the victim to show "mercy" and "not judge" the abuser is misplaced and wrong. Such a victim, according to scripture, should be helped to be free. Mercy must go to the victim first, and then, if possible and constructive, if repentant, it must be offered to the transgressor as well. Like God said: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" (Isa.58:6)

Mercy is not to be used to help the transgressor continue his transgressions. It is for the one who repents and wants to recompense and change his ways. In this lies the key to knowing when to show mercy and when not to.

Where there is no admission of guilt or fault, there will most likely be no change or growth without them getting a consequence for their actions. If someone has heartfelt regret and takes responsibility for their wrong, additional punishment is not always necessary, and mercy will help that person grow to be an even better person. It is all about discernment.

Church tribulations

- *Many use the Christian story of persecution as a misunderstood idea that God desires a Christian to be a victim and the holiness of victimhood.*
- *Does God abandon his people in the darkest hour, and will he abandon you?*
- *Does God torture His people to make them pure and holy?*
- *This chapter will look at why God allowed the persecution of the church and its members.*

In the Bible, we see God fight for His nation, Israel, against their enemies. Yet, during the Christian era and some *Does God abandon his people in the darkest hour, and will he abandon you?* Israel's, God allowed them to suffer tribulation and even lose the battle against their adversaries. It might seem like a contradiction at first glance. Does God want His people to suffer, or does he want to help them win their battles? The Christian persecution has made many Christians think God desires His people to remain victims for them to be good Christians. Martyrs are admired, and so churches make many of them into saints that can be prayed to, and their images are hung up like icons.

The reason God has permitted Christian persecution is not because He sanctifies victimhood or because being a victim automatically makes you good. Again, the reason is tied to the testimony against sin. When Israel was a state following God's law, God could fight with them because they were under His authority. When Israel left God and followed pagan laws, God allowed them to be conquered and scattered.

The reason is simple.

If both Israel and its pagan enemies followed the same idol practices and injustices, the same unfair laws, how can God side with one against another?

Therefore, God urged them to turn from their ways so that He could defend and save them.

Some kings understood this and sought a reformation for the country while they were under threat.

King Hezekiah saw how town after town in Israel was captured by the king of Assyria, and they did not stand a chance. Hezekiah threw away the idols, reinstated God's laws, and urged the people to be faithful to the laws of heaven. When he did and the Assyrian army came and laid siege around Jerusalem like they had all the other Judean and Israeli cities they conquered, God finally saved them. In one night, God sent his angels to defeat the great Assyrian army. By making God their king by following His laws and standards, God could defend them as a king does for his kingdom.

Later, the town fell into transgression again, and Jerusalem's future was sealed. They followed pagan morals and laws. God could not and would not save them, and instead he allowed the kingdom, whose customs they followed, to take control over the city. Some forty years before that, King Josiah cried before the Lord, tried to turn the people around, and reinstated God's laws and even the sanctuary system. As a response, God said He would not let Jerusalem be destroyed while Josiah was king. His sons did not follow their father's path. We see here what makes the difference.

Jerusalem had become an idolatrous city. How could God favor them and save them without being unfair? God said about Jerusalem: *"And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her"* (Eze 5:6)

They were more evil than the other pagan nations.

"Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to

another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD” (2.Kings.21:16)

Even the prophet Isaiah had been sown in two during the reign of King Manasseh. Their hands were full of blood when they demanded that God save them from their enemies. They refused to change their ways. God allowed the temple built in His honor to be destroyed. He did not want His temple to stand in the middle of cruelty. However, when they turned from their ways and asked for mercy, God let them rebuild His temple among them once more.

When Christ came during the second temple period, everything had become bad again. Only this time they had become extreme in other ways, but the result was the same: cruelty and the shedding of innocent blood. No matter how sin manifests itself, it results in the same thing. Jesus said to them: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt.23:37-38)*

It happened like Christ said, and the second temple was destroyed as well, and it was never rebuilt.

When they repented and asked God for mercy after the first temple destruction, God granted them 490 years to turn from their ways and do better. This time was around the same time of mercy God offered to those in the land before them, the Canaanites, when they were wicked (Gen 15:30). God was being fair. It is also part of God's long-suffering. However, they did not change their ways. They still treated each other badly, suppressed others, misrepresented God while claiming to represent Him, killed God's servants, and even killed God's son, who was without sin. God would not continue to pardon them, for they would become worse, and it would cause even more suffering than that which they already had. Throughout the Old Testament, we see how God protects them when they are faithful, or at least trying to be, and allows their enemies to harm them when they refuse to be educated in that which is good and are rebellious. God even told them ahead of time the conditions for His protections through Moses (Deut.28) This is not about making faults or errors, either as a people or a leader. God had already provided atonement for cases of disobedience through the sanctuary. It is not about God leaving them because they made mistakes. It is about the people and leaders rejecting God's standard and being judged by it.

When they do reject God as their authority, they place themselves outside of God's protection. Israel and Judah provoked their enemies' anger with their own actions. God cannot favor one bad person over another, unless one is much worse than the other, of course. God's enemies, seeing God's people without full protection, target them first and foremost as a strategy because those who have had the truth are closer to rediscovering it. Through their history, they have gained knowledge that can help them convert again. It makes sense then that if left in part unprotected, Satan will try to destroy them to erase the truth of God if possible.

Thus, God's people who turn their backs on God are more vulnerable than those who have rejected God all along. Satan's anger towards God's backslidden people will manifest in a greater way.

This fact is lamented over in the Bible, when God's people felt especially targeted compared to the ungodly.

It is not uncommon to question when suffering why one's own punishment seems so much more severe than others who are just as bad or even worse. What it can mean is that Satan sees that you still have a seed in you and that you are likely to listen to the Spirit and turn, and so he targets you harder. As a Christian, it can almost be considered a compliment. If Satan is against you even when you have backslidden, it means he thinks you still show potential to go back to God.

Solomon wrote: "All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that longeth *his life* in his wickedness". (Ecc.7:15)

Or, like Job said, "*Why does the wicked prosper?*"

Earth is a spiritual battle. Satan does not always attack his workers; instead, he gives them money and peace. While he focuses more on targeting those "sheep" that run out of Christ's fold. Thus, a backsliding Christian is under great attack, while someone who has been on Satan's side the whole time can live in luxury and selfishness unharmed. When Satan was tempting Christ in the wilderness, he offered him what was valuable in the world. Christ declined and would rather suffer for His people's salvation instead (Luke 4:5-7).

On the other side, we can also see in the Bible that good people are attacked and suffer persecution even though they have been faithful. The prophet Isaiah was not sawn in two because he was unfaithful to God, but rather because he was faithful. Even the first Christian movements suffered harsh persecution. Several of the good apostles were martyred.

God warned the Christians of what was coming: "*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*"

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev.2:9-10)

Here, the wording can make a great difference. Did God allow it to test them, or was God trying to tell them that what was going to happen would be hard on their faith and to try to stay strong despite the circumstance? Most likely the latter, as God did not inspire the sinner to sin against them. God is not behind their trials; evil men are. God is encouraging them to keep their faith through their difficulties because that is when it is easy to give it up in bitterness.

Being victims was so common for Christians in the first centuries that the mentality of victimhood is still part of Christianity to this day. The idea that God is glorified by our suffering is not an idea that feels sane for a trauma victim. Many survivors feel unsafe in an environment where it is claimed God holds the hand of the one harming them to "test our allegiance" to Him. God cannot trust someone who has been threatened and tortured to prove themselves faithful as much as anyone else can. Anyone declaring devotion, while pressed up against a wall or between a rock and a hard place, might be deceiving both themselves and others. Neither is God such a fool. The Bible is clear that it is His love for us that converts us. The apostle John stated: "*We love him, because he first loved us*" (1.Jhn 4:19) Only love can inspire love.

Christians are not saved by allowing themselves to be victimized; they are saved by Christ's death for our sake alone. What happened to the first Christians was a consequence of their bravery, as we will investigate.

Another thing that can make many feel unsafe is the idea that if you make a mistake, God withdraws from you. It might be tempting to compare the history and faults of Israel with your relationship with God. After all, it is written as a warning and example to us (Heb.4:11). This can become an irrational fear for a long-term trauma survivor.

God did not leave His people when they strayed; He stayed and tried everything He possibly could to save them. And even when He would not protect them as a governmental institution, He still had mercy on the individuals within it. The first temple was destroyed, but people like Jeremiah, Baruch, Ebedmelech, Daniel, Ezekiel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah are men God protected, saved, and helped. All because, in the middle of the chaos, they turned to God.

God does not need you to be perfect for Him to help or care for you; He just needs you to be willing. Using the stories in the Bible where God had to remove His protection as a way to scare yourself or others into thinking that God has abandoned you or them is not a good way to be a Christian.

It will strain you and cause you to create a relationship where you need to protect yourself against God's punishments rather than finding shelter under His wings (Psa.36:7). This can be a temptation that those with childhood trauma can fall for and leave a strain on their relationship with heaven.

In these instances, it is good to have a greater understanding of why God let them be punished and place it in the context of what was actually happening.

One of the reasons for the downfall of Israel was not just their great crimes against each other and God, but that when God tried to reason with them, they would not hear. God sent them messengers to talk sense to them, to persuade them to change their conduct, and to nearly beg them to let God save them. Instead of listening to them, they killed the ones God sent them. (Heb 11:36-37)

Jesus was upset about how those who came to plead with them were treated: *“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:*

That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Luk 11:49-52).

On judgment day, those who rejected God's plea might try to make their case that they were ignorant and “meant well” when they rebelled against God's rule. How those sent to them were treated will be a witness against their claims and make sure they are judged and not permitted within the gates of the New Jerusalem. Had they not shown the extent of their violent rejection, there might have been doubt on judgment day. Now there is not. Even among the violent, there will be men saved because they finally saw reason. One of them is Paul.

When we compare our own personal pilgrimage to the story of the nations of Israel and Judah, we should remember that they were not rejected because of their sin, but because they refused to accept the

remedy. They would not let God save them. In this way, they lost their help and what that help would bring them: protection and deliverance.

At one point in time, the remnant of Judah and Israel tried to listen to God and wanted to receive His help. A sinful priest was all they had to plead their case at the time. But this priest was willing. This was all God needed: *“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*

And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zec.3:3-7)

When Isaiah was called to be a prophet, he did not feel he got the job because he was without sin.

Rather, he said after getting the commission: *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isa 6:5-7).

We see this repeatedly. Few have committed a crime like King David did. But he repented greatly and begged God to restore his heart. *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psa 51:7)*

Later, when his son started a rebellion against him, partly as a result of David's sins, God still saved and restored him. Not from all the consequences of his actions, but He still helped him through the injustice he was experiencing.

God could not save the former king Saul, as he did not trust or want God to help him change his ways. The Bible shows us that God is not dependent on our past being without blemish, but that we are willing to receive His help.

Even an earthly governmental prison system is built upon similar principles. A convict can be released on trial if they show an understanding of their crime, regret, and a willingness to receive help to change. If they do not show these three characteristics, they are not given an early release.

God's mercy is even greater than this. God offers to not even remember our past mistakes: *“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa.43:25)*

In the book of Revelation, in a message to the last church, we see how God is upset about their sins and coldness. Yet, he says if they are willing to seek His help, they will be granted the privilege of sitting on

Christ's holy throne next to Him. What incredible mercy for people who have opposed the principles of His kingdom to be allowed to sit there with Him! God does not hold grudges.

God's mercy is extreme and ridiculous and is not deserving of the accusations and suspicion Satan plants in the minds of people, especially childhood trauma victims.

The story of Israel losing its protection does not reflect God's attitude toward His children, who made a few errors. His love is not that weak and short-lived.

If we refuse to receive His help, if we refuse to apologize for our wrongdoings to others, if we refuse His mercy, then we will be judged by the heavenly laws. God has no other choice because those we have hurt, and the spectators, have made a complaint against us. We are all on trial for the chain reactions we took part in, for the chain reactions we created, and for every selfish and damaging act we have done towards others. Sins that God has offered to remove. If we do not want His salvation or help, He cannot give us His protection. The two go together.

Christian persecution

It was God's original plan for there to be a kingdom of God here on earth among mankind. This is what He tried to accomplish through the nation of Israel. A haven for all who wish to follow the moral principles of His rule. A place where God could protect them.

When Israel did not cooperate, this kingdom was lost to man. *“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36)*

The disciples were ready to fight, as seen when Peter used his sword to try to save Jesus (Matt.26:51). This is clearly not what Christ meant, for he asked Peter not to fight. If the disciples alone had started a physical fight with the Jewish authorities, they would have started a rebellion within the nation. Jesus wanted His people as a whole nation to defend him and stand by him. When the Jewish authorities did not do that, it became apparent that He could not create a temporal kingdom on earth as He had first wanted, as seen in the history of Israel. This resulted in God's people being scattered and even persecuted by both the Jewish and Roman authorities.

This was not God's design; He did not want His people to be hunted prey. He had created the states of Israel and Judah to protect His people. But no government would represent Him and let Him lead. This ultimately meant there would be no country or nation that would act as a shield from the pagan and ungodly. God's people would be forced to live under pagan governmental rule and face the conflict of interests that naturally would arise when one ideology crashed with another. Whenever a pagan governmental law clashed with God's laws, the believer was and is forced to choose and suffer persecution.

It was because the Jews rejected God's leadership and Christ as their king that the Christians ended up being persecuted for decades. God's first plan was for His people to be faithful, for the kingdom of Judah to remain, to receive the teachings of Christ, and to protect His people.

When they did not, it happened, which is common in this world. That the innocent must suffer because of the majority's unfaithfulness.

Such was the case even when Babylon took Jerusalem. The Bible speaks of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were faithful to God, yet they ended up losing their homeland too. They were forced to

leave their homes and be taken to Babylon, and they were even forced to help Babylon flourish instead of their own country.

Judah's unfaithfulness harmed not only them, but also Christ's believers. The sanctuary of God's people on earth was destroyed, and everyone had to find a way to survive as believers among hostile non-believers.

The Christian persecution is a cause-and-effect witness against Israel's unfaithfulness.

You can compare it to a child suffering because of their parents' sins. They have still not sinned themselves, yet they are still punished for their parents' decisions. The only way for God to save them from their parents' mistakes is if He takes the children away from them at birth and gives them to someone else. It goes back to whether God should punish people before they commit a crime or after. If He does before, then people will feel scared and suppressed and doubt that God is fair. If He does after, people will understand, but damage has already happened. God can foretell the future, but the thousands upon thousands of witnesses in the courts of heaven and on earth cannot. (Isa.46:10; Dan.7:10)

Should God have let Judah keep their kingdom, despite their infidelity, to protect those faithful among them? They hunted down their own people who received Christ and had them killed.

Judah also set the Roman leaders up against the Christians. Israel was not a sanctity for God's people, nor did they represent God right, and so God allowed them to show their true face, and their punishment was that God withdrew His protection from them, which allowed the stronger Roman army to defeat and scatter them.

Jesus' words that His "kingdom is not of this world" reveal how He wanted to have a safe country for His people but was constantly rebelled against.

God did not desire for His people to be persecuted and severally treated. It is not God's will for His people to be harmed. Following the damage being victimized has on someone's character, and that victimhood itself does not purify or sanctify anyone, God did not need it to happen. Neither is He asking his people to play victims today.

Christians being victimized because of their faith is not God's doing; rather, it is the wrath of God's enemies manifesting, and God is not happy about it.

Revelation 12:17 says: *"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"*

Many believe God desires His people to be persecuted and suffer, so He can purify them through it. If it is so, the demons and evil people are doing the Lord's work. The damaging purgatory theology presented by the Catholic Church has kept this idea alive and caused many Christians to think they are more in right with God when they suffer than when they are happy and thriving. This is especially damaging to long-term victims, as they will find these ideas fitting with their self-abuse and will easily go into the role-play.

God has not hired Satan or demons to abuse His people. They work against God and not for God. God is not a sadist.

The purifying fire God speaks of is to allow His people's love, sincerity, and patience to be tested and tried. He wants His people to battle the sin in their life, to make the hard decisions that will develop their character. To say no to something wrong when others say yes.

Jesus said that impurity comes from our hearts. *"There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man".*

(Mark 7:15) Now if the only thing that defiles a man and needs cleansing is in the heart, then everything God says about purification is about purifying our hearts. Our hearts represent our will to do either good or evil. You cannot force the heart to be good; it has to be inspired to be good. God says repeatedly that it is the heart that He wants to purify. (Ezek.11:19, Heb.8:10):

Sometimes tribulation can influence the heart only because humans tend to learn compassion the hard way. Because men have an instinct to victim blame others. Some do not understand how to be compassionate toward others until they have personally experienced unfair hardships. God allows it because of the hardness of our hearts, not because He wishes bad on anyone.

Christ declared, *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"* (Mat 5:7-9). God has compassion for those who show others compassion. We learn to correct ourselves and our hearts through what we experience, and so God sometimes allows us to have those experiences. Not evil or cruelty; that is never God's will.

God does not purify His people by having others harm them. The following is said in the Bible to purify:

Blood "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1.John 1:7)

Water is used as a symbol of purification. However, physical water cannot remove anyone's uncleanness, only what the water symbolized, which is Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer after He has removed their sins. (Exo.29:4; Num.8:6-7; Heb.10:11; Ezek.36:25, John 3, John 13:8)

Hyssop/Herbs "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7) Again, a symbol of Christ's righteousness given to the repentant sinner.

Fire, Gold, and silver (Mal.3:3, Psalm 12:6) God compares his people to gold and silver that needs purification. Just as we are gold and silver, the fire is also symbolic. Fire is even a symbol of the work of the Holy Spirit, who came to convince us of our sin (Mat.3:11-12; Acts 2:3). Being confronted with a wrong can be a hard process, and dealing with it rightly goes against our natural inclination to defend ourselves and our perception of being the good guy. With the realization and confrontation come shame and pride that need to be dealt with.

God is compared to a fire several times; it means the fire that purifies us is also in His presence. About Christ, it is said three times in Revelation: "His eyes *were* as a flame of fire" (Rev.19:12)

Faith is said to have a transforming ability that cleanses: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts.15:8-9)

Obedience to the truth. James writes:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:7-8)

Hope in Christ: “And every man that hath this hope in him purified himself, even as he is pure” (1.John 3:3).

The angel Gabriel says to the prophet Daniel about the end times: *“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Dan.12:10)*

Notice again how being purified and doing wickedly is the opposite. Showing that purification is talking about changing a man’s heart to do good.

Contrary to popular Christian belief, nowhere in the Bible does it say that God will have evil men torture His people to make them good. Nor should we think it will happen and permit it to be done to others or ourselves.

There will be many people in heaven who died young and inexperienced. Ultimately, because we are saved through Christ's merits and not our own. Tribulations cannot save anyone; they even make some people worse. That is why there is so much violence and crime in poor neighborhoods. Their struggle inspires violence and crime, not holiness.

However, sometimes God will allow circumstances to be like a cleansing fire if He says it will help wake that person up to their current condition and seek a change.

God would rather punish us than give up on us, and so few will be lost whom God did not first try to warn in different ways.

Even parents are forced to punish their children when they go too far with their behavior in the hope that the correction will change the path they're on. Parents raise their voices when needed. The children who never receive any consequence or guidance usually get out of control and become a menace to society.

“For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Pro 3:12)

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb.12:5-9)

This is not about sadistic suppression. It is about God holding us accountable, telling us to make up for a wrong and to do better next time, just like an earthly parent would.

What an earthly parent would not do is hand their child over to someone who does not love them to torture and abuse them in some strange notion that that this will make the child healthy, strong, and devoted to them. Neither does God. So God correcting His people is not to be confused with the persecution of Christians.

Purification through fire.

Christ has an issue with His last church, mentioned in the book of Revelation. They think they are right with God, but they are not.

He says to them: *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Rev 3:17-18).

Several times in the Bible, God's purifying process is compared to the purification of fine metal. The first we notice is how God compares His children to costly, valuable metal even before it is purified. He calls us valuable. Purifying gold and silver is only meant to increase the value and beauty that are already there. A silversmith knows his job is done when he sees his reflection in the metal. In the same way, Christ desires to see His image, His values, and His principles in us. They will make us happy and do good for others.

When purifying gold in Biblical times, they used fire to make it easier to remove impurities, which in the process would rise to the surface, and they would be left with only the gold.

It is the same way with us; by using this metaphor, God is telling us we are valuable to Him, but there are things about us that are not good and that are destroying us and others. And He wishes to remove it from us so we can be our best.

How does this practically work? Not with real fire, but by God confronting us with the things we need to change. The Holy Spirit has been given such a job: *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Joh.16:8)*

We can't be Christians and go around destroying others. God wants us to let Him help us remove these character traits that cause so much misery.

When you put gold in the fire, it is really a safe procedure because gold is not destroyed by fire. Gold can take the heat just fine; it is only the impurities' that are stuck on the gold that cannot stand the fire in the purifier process.

God does not want to destroy us while purifying us. Gold handles fire. He wants us to let go of the things that harm us and others.

If we won't, we put God in a situation where He is forced to judge us to secure peace.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1.Cor.10:13)

In a world of sin, God is left with only two choices. Either He forcefully stops everyone from sinning and gets a fearful and rebellious response and perhaps loses everyone, or He has to allow us to learn from experience that sin is bad so He at least can save a part of the world.

When a child touches a plate in the kitchen and burns his hands, he will be less likely to touch it again.

In the same way, God allows us to suffer consequences, so we can learn, adjust, and reason.

He wants man to be free, and so He tells us right from wrong and the consequences, and then He lets us make the decision. If He then removes the consequence, He makes Himself a liar, and the next time He warns, we will not heed the warning or obey.

God wants to speak to our hearts. If we have no compassion, is it right for God to show us compassion and spare us from all situations while we judge others? So, our actions often force God to take a step back and allow us to experience things that will teach us and shape us into better people.

It was not God's initial intent for man to learn this way. There was no symbolic furnace for Adam and Eve before they sinned so that they could learn to be good. There was no need; sin had not formed inside their hearts. There was nothing to purify, no hard lessons to learn.

God allows hardships to awaken us to our faults and bad personality traits so that when they come to the surface, like the impurities stuck on the gold, we can choose to do something about them.

We cannot get our remedy if we do not understand that we are sick.

In Revelation 3, in His message to His church, Christ has the medicine ready. He is ready to heal and protect us. But He cannot give us this help before we ask for it. He says the problem is that we do not see our needs: *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev.3:17)*

He also says: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev.3:19-20).

Christ does not force Himself on anyone. That is not how anyone is purified. Because it is a matter of the heart, He speaks to our hearts. Despite how crucial the warning is, Christ is placing Himself “outside the door knocking,” and we have to choose to open up.

The only way is if we see our needs, and we see that we are not right with Him. Then, as we “open the door” and grant Him permission to work with us, He says He will help us make the changes needed, but we need to ask him. (Rev.3:18)

Christ has the white raiment ready to clothe us with His righteousness, meaning we give up our righteousness for His.

He has eye salve, so we can distinguish and see things in a healthy way.

Although tribulations can be the result of our own actions and God cannot always interfere without harming us even further or harming others, He does not desire for us to be harmed.

Christian persecution

Some trials Christians go through are undeserved and come from pure hate from those who hate Christ and the Bible. At first glance, it seems there is no reason for God to allow this. But as we addressed, cause and effect have a bigger picture than just us in a certain situation. If you are laid off from your job because of your faith, the issue is far greater than just you not being in the wrong and the employer being mean. It is a societal problem. It is a heavenly human rights court issue.

As a witness against sin, God allowed societies to be affected by their choices, and He has allowed persecution because it witnessed the rotten structure of other religions and even corrupt Christianity. Can you create a peaceful society based on pagan morals and ideals? Stopping the persecution immediately would be like covering up the sins in the hearts of other people. It would also cover how a society that rejects God behaves and why God must one day end it.

We see how tribulation exposes a society in several examples. In the Bosnian War, Christians and Muslims who had previously lived in harmony started turning on each other. In Rwanda, the same happened when the Hutu's got control and started targeting the Tutsis. All over the world, we have seen groups being targeted by others. Marxist-inspired countries against all religions. In Myanmar Buddhists targeted Muslims. In India, Hindus have been burning Christian churches. Another place we see Muslims targeting Jews and Christians. At Christ's time, Jews persecuted Christians, and later, during the Middle Ages, Christians persecuted the Jews.

So how can you tell who are the good guys and who are not? If overturning a government exposes the new group to behave in the same way, do you even know who someone truly is if the tables are not turned?

It is clear throughout history that everyone thinks they are "the good guys" fighting "the bad guys". It is often thought that the minority or victims in such a cultural war are the good ones. It is normal to sympathize with those who are suffering at the hands of others.

In the courts of heaven, they do not just go through the cause and effect of an individual but also of societies. In Revelation and the book of Daniel, we see God judging "beasts," which are governments. Christ was persecuted by His own people, and He warned His followers that they too would be persecuted by their own. Good and bad are not always seen in what religion or anti-religion someone professes. There are good and bad in all societies.

Usually, the strongest and the majority decide the direction a society takes. And God has allowed this cause and effect to be seen by everyone. Every nation's and people's decisions are reflected in everything from their economy to their behavior with each other and in their conflicts.

Some countries have been heavy with conflicts and inner turmoil which has been a result of the leader and people's bad morals. And in all these different cultures there are those who wish to do good, to be good and live in peace, who are targeted and unfairly persecuted. There are also minorities that are rightly persecuted. Like ISIS and terror groups within countries trying to take over territories against the people's will. Look at Italy and Mexico, where the mafia and cartels are controlling several areas. They may be fewer, but they are not victims of the government. They are rightfully targeted.

Sometimes minorities are unfairly targeted. Laws are often a reflection of the people's morals. The different laws in different countries reflect that. For many in the west, it is inconceivable that incest is

not forbidden in some other countries but legal. Some places allow drugs, in other places, there are big prison sentences for having them. Leadership in a country very often reflects the group mentality of the people, with some exceptions. But no leader can have power without some support.

Everything that is happening in the world, all the different ways to rule a land, all the different laws, are all evidence against sin in the courts of heaven. God commanded in His law that there be only one God and one worship. The myriad of beliefs in the world is the main reason for all the world's conflicts.

Everyone thinks they can do a better job at ruling, and so the world goes in circles. The West has praised democracy as the ultimate and best form of leadership. Yet, what happens when the majority is wrong? Or when the people are split evenly and the leaders therefore only represent half? Even in western democracy, the need to create other institutions like NATO, the EU, the WHO, and the UN exists where none of the people in possession of power and making laws have been elected democratically. Even the democratic countries are cheating and creating only an illusion of democracy. Because it is difficult to move forward if the majority does not understand or want what the rulers want. So, they created institutions where they could make laws and decisions outside of people's control. Democracy can just as easily become a suppressor as kingship or another system of rule.

It is human to have compassion and view people targeted by a majority or by a nation as innocent victims, even when they are not. Victimhood manipulates. Thus, God does not judge by who is victimized but by their hearts. Countless experiments have been done on human nature, showing that when roles are switched, those who consider themselves to be fair and good end up suppressing others. If the minority is in the majority, would they treat the minority as they were treated? If Islam took over Myanmar and had the Buddhists and Marxists outnumbered, would they treat them well? Let us hope they would, but there is no certainty that if the roles were reversed, it would be different. This is because people will always feel threatened by those who think and act differently, and with feeling threatened comes fear and violence.

In the western world, those who had morals that went against the Bible felt suppressed when the west was mostly Christian. Now that the west is overturned and the agnostics, atheists, and differently sexually oriented are celebrated, the same demand for freedom and equality is taking away the rights of the Christians. Many gays have felt suppressed by Christians, forced to "live in a closet," and denied speaking openly. Yet in Northern Europe, Christians are now placed in "closets" and hated if they speak openly about their faith. Most people would like to think they are different when in a better position, but that is not always the case.

Thus, the idea that God only purifies His people by allowing them hardships should consider that God knows that many people show their true selves only when in power while appearing pious when humiliated.

Thus, God willingly wanting His people to be suppressed is not going to produce "saints," as many Christians have believed.

The persecution of Christians is the result of generational sins. The Jews' sins prevented God from protecting Christians in the land of Israel. The sins of the pagans, who wanted to force Christians to partake in Roman traditions, thinking it was for the best for society, or Roman Catholicism, who, when

in power in Europe, persecuted Christians who wanted to follow the Bible over church speculations and traditions. They, too, thought they were doing God a service by ruling with an iron hand. All of it is written down in the books of heaven to judge man and expose the nature of sin.

In a world of sin, there will always be uprisings. There will always be someone wanting more or wanting things differently, with new ideas. There will always be discontent where there is jealousy. Where there is no belief in God, there will always be a need to create godlike authority. There will always be a need to rule and to have laws to punish those who do not adjust to the order. Using authority is not bad; it is how it is used.

If God had reset every generation when it came to cause and effect from each ideology, then it would not be exposed as destructive. To expose sin, God must let it show how it manifests over time. Sin often goes by immediate need and relief and can appear good in the beginning. It can even appear to bring harmony and peace at first. Only by letting it continue can one see the long-term effects. Thus, God cannot remove the long-term effects if He wants to prove that the ideology of sinning is bad. People will not understand they are suppressed before they try to change how they live their lives from the social norm. They feel they live in a good and free country because they do not see the discrimination until they are discriminated against.

Many are kind until they are taken advantage of. Bad people force good people to change or add laws and rules.

If society is too chaotic, the majority will long for structure and limitations. If there is too much order and limitation, they long for freedom. When you remove an identity, the need for a new one will follow. You can change what you call things, but you cannot change what they are or how they affect others and yourself. The nature of sin is not fooled by calling it in different terms.

In the society, good and bad cannot be interpreted by whosoever is feeling suppressed. Good does not follow the apparent victim as little as it follows whoever is in control.

Summary:

- God does not need His people to be persecuted to make them good or appear good. A Christian becomes good when he does good, not through suppression.
- God allows persecution to expose people and nations and the results of their ideology.
- He allows it to show both man and the universe how sinful authorities do not work either one way or another. All they do is walk in circles, back and forth.

How persecution kept the first church clean

The reason the first Christian church stayed for the most part pure in its practice was not because others evil purified them, but for two other reasons. The first is that when we have hardships, the need to be close to God and communicate with God becomes greater. They spent more time with God when they were facing hatred and when they were in need. When the persecution stopped, and they did not feel the great need for God anymore, many started spending less time on God and became occupied with pleasure and the pursuit of wealth.

The temptation then became to try to change who God is and stands for so they could feel good about ungodly choices, and as a result, the purity of the church was lost.

The other reason persecution kept the church innocent for a while was that it made it less attractive to be a part of the church. Those who were only partly converted or had alternative motives would avoid the hated group and seek recognition in the world instead. When being Christian was not as lucrative, fewer narcissists and people with double standards could be found there.

This does not mean God condones persecution, but in everything that happens, God tries to bring the best out of the situation. In the case of Christian persecution, the unpopularity of the church kept many bad people away from it.

When Christians started getting influence and power in the Roman Empire, the church was full of power-hungry men and women using the name of Christ for their own benefit. Naturally, doctrines changed or were tempered with. Christianity became something very different from what it had been. Now a new group of Christians who wanted to keep the gospel undefiled ended up as a minority and were persecuted by the Christian majority. As a natural consequence, they managed to stay purer and more biblically authentic during their trials.

God did not use evil men to educate and purify His people. He allowed tribulation to serve as a witness against those who were bad and to reveal people's true intentions. At first, this helped bystanders distinguish and understand what the truth was.

They could have seemingly God-fearing and humble bishops parading, claiming to have the truth, but those they tortured and killed practiced Christ's lessons to a greater degree. Persecution will not only serve as a witness in the trials in heaven, but it helped people living in those times wake up and see what was going on. Most people have a built-in hunger for justice and disdain for injustice.

Paul told the Christians to be patient during persecution because this is how they could win the battle (Rom.12:12). The attacks against them were showing the world they were not the rebels they were accused of being, and that the accusations against them were built upon lies and hate.

It is like exposing a narcissist. They are lovely to most people, outgoing, and nice. Then they are extremely cruel to a few. If you were to step up and accuse the narcissist, many with a positive experience would just think you were the problem. The only way to expose the narcissist is to let him play out his bad behavior and expose himself. If not, he will continue harming in the dark.

Likewise, it was for Christians. Those persecuting them seemed noble and appeared to be fighting a good cause. The Roman leaders did charity work and helped the poor and the weak. Who was really at fault? Who was causing the dissension? To begin with, it did seem like the Christians were the troublemakers and their accusers the victims. Only by allowing it to play out would people understand and see that the claimed victims and accusers of the Christians had other motives than ensuring security for the public. Only by seeing it played out would the people demand a change and make different decisions for their community.

God wants people to think, make decisions, learn, and grow.

Christians weren't supposed to be pathetically suppressed; they were asked to speak up for the truth. To be warriors. And in any war, there are those who will die. The Christians who were often martyred were those who spoke up and were not afraid to show their beliefs. They were trying to change the world for the better, but were harmed in the process. The true Christians were victims, but they were not stuck in victimhood. They stood firm for their beliefs. They did not fight with a sword, as they were

not a nation or owned land. Rather, they fought with their mouths and how they lived their lives, trying to help people all over the world make a change.

Later Christians thought that succumbing to their enemies was humble and pure. They silence themselves and think it's wrong to speak freely, for they consider it unchristian to provoke others.

Christians who are silenced are not resembling those who stood bravely for the truth and were martyred in the past.

In the Bible, we see that the reason for Christian persecution was Christian bravery. The religious leaders said to them: "Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. ...

...And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Act 5:28-29 : 40-41).

All they had to do was be quiet about their faith. Christ asked for volunteers to speak up and share the gospel and offer salvation, and they wanted to do it, knowing the risk that followed. Christ even told them about the risk and the result, so they could make an intelligent decision. (John 15:20-21) Again, they were not stuck in victimhood, but were warriors for the faith. They knew what they were doing and chose to do it.

Ancient Roman writings also show clearly that severe Christian persecution happened to those who were brave and open about their faith. The following letter is between two Roman authority figures, Pliny the Younger asks Trajan how to solve the problems with the Christians and writes:

"It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you in all cases where I do not feel sure, for who can better direct my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any legal examination of the Christians, and I do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties, or how searching an inquiry should be made. I have hesitated a great deal in considering whether any distinctions should be drawn according to the ages of the accused; whether the weak should be punished as severely as the more robust; whether if they renounce their faith they should be pardoned, or whether the man who has once been a Christian should gain nothing by recanting; whether the name itself, even though otherwise innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes that gather round it.

In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians; if they say yes, then I repeat the question a second and a third time, warning them of the penalties it entails, and if they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison".

Trajan answers him:

"You have adopted the proper course, my dear Pliny, in examining into the cases of those who have been denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down to meet a question of such wide extent. The Christians are not to be hunted out ; if they are brought before you and the

offence is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation - that if any one denies that he is a Christian and makes it clear that he is not, by offering prayers to our deities, then he is to be pardoned because of his recantation, however suspicious his past conduct may have been. * But pamphlets published anonymously must not carry any weight whatever, no matter what the charge may be, for they are not only a precedent of the very worst type, but they are not in consonance with the spirit of our age” (<https://www.attalus.org/old/pliny10b.html>)

Christ did not free the Jews from Roman oppressors; He did not physically change the current situation. The world started slowly changing after Christ set His foot on this planet because He gave mankind hope, love, and a future. And this hope and meaning alone changed a large part of the world to become Christian and change their morals. Even the Roman leaders converted in their time. The strength and nobility, kindness, and bravery of the Christians were admired, which brought them the sympathy they needed to change people’s perceptions of both them and Christ.

Just like the American soldiers arriving at the beach in Normandie, France, to rescue Europe from the hands of Hitler during World War II took that risk to accomplish their mission, and many died, so did the first Christians willingly take the risk involved in sharing the gospel and changing people’s hearts at the cost of their own.

Christians today that are silenced and dare not share their beliefs are the ones subdued and oppressed. They dare not be themselves or defend their beliefs. Such people live in chosen victimhood. They do not resemble the victims of the first christian churches.

FINAL VICTORY

- *God's plan is to free his people and not allow them to be victimized anymore.*
- *Why God will take revenge on behalf of His people*

In the end times, God will turn the tables. Victimhood will benefit no one, impress no one, and purify no one. Even bad people claim victimhood and use it for their advancement. Some of these bad people have been real victims, but they are still bad. It is a known fact that people with narcissistic tendencies will claim victimhood and make it appear that their victim is the bad guy. Only time can expose the truth, but what happens when mankind runs out of time? Allowing persecution will have no purpose in the end.

The only way God can protect His people is if they let God cleanse them of their sins and they agree to stop rebelling against His law. If they don't, He will have no argument to favor them over others. For those who follow His laws, He has promised to enclose them like a wall, protect them, and give them refuge from their enemies (Isa.49:16; Zec.2:5; Ps.41:1-2; Deut.7:15; Psalm 61:3).

There comes a time when nothing positive will come out of God's people being victimized. Because of the many tribulations and uprisings all over the world and the many claiming victimhood as a people, Christians being victimized would impress no one to become a Christian. Muslims are targeted for hate, indigenous people are discriminated against, prideful sinners are claiming victimhood for being called out, and so on. There are many religious and non-religious groups claiming victimhood today. Even Christians hate other Christian groups.

Persecution would not reveal Christianity as good, rather its values would drown along with the values of everyone else claiming victimhood.

Does the fact that Muslims are persecuted in some places prove Muslims are telling the truth and are good? No, because we know you have good and bad Muslims. We have Muslims that persecute and Muslims that are being persecuted. The truth is not revealed in their persecution.

The same is true for other cultural minorities and majorities. The same is true for Christians. People claiming the name of Christ have, in their time, persecuted almost all religions. Christians have also been persecuted by all religions.

Sometimes they have been in the right, sometimes they have been in the wrong.

The truth is no longer revealed by someone being targeted. Many religions and anti-religions have many martyrs, but the truth is not revealed.

When Christ's true followers are persecuted in the end time, it will just draw in the world's noise and help no one. So in the end, the greater testimony that God wants to give through His people, is His ability to provide for and protect those who choose to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

That is why we see Christ turning the tables in the end times and stopping the persecutors and punishing them. Truth and God's people are uplifted when He is saving and protecting them. This will serve as an example.

In the heavenly books, every wrongful act and every persecution are written down and will be punished. Because harming God's people, His true believers, is not of God and is a crime. For those who have been martyred in the past, God reassures them and says judgment will come to those who did it:

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Rev 6:9-11).

In the end times, God will punish the world for its suppression and persecution of His people. God's people are mocked and not heeded. As Gabriel told Daniel: “when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Dan.12:7)

When no one cares about God's people's rights, no one cares about their tears or their warnings, there is nothing more they can do; God will not permit them to suffer needlessly, even if it has been done willingly for the salvation of others. Further suffering would break them and save no one.

So, God turns the tables and punishes the world himself: “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double” (Rev 18:4-6)

Here God makes it clear again that if you do what they do and live as they do, if you partake in their sins, God cannot protect you. But if you do not, God will avenge you. He says He will overthrow the whole infrastructure and trade. He will cause the deceivers and their allied leadership to fall.

For God never condoned the mistreatment of His people. He just waited in mercy in the hope people would understand their wrong and turn. When they would not, justice comes. “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (Rev.10:20)

Here comes another important principle. Keeping God's laws and being faithful to heaven require us to leave the judgment for the heavenly court and for them to execute its judgment. It says, “God hath avenged you on her”. It is not for the Christians to take out their swords but to make their plea to the

heavenly courts and to let them handle the situation. This requires faith and trust in God's willingness to not just seek mercy for the sinner, but also justice for those harmed by those who do not repent.

True Christians will be victorious. They will judge the world. (Rev.20:4). Just like Christ was harmed and killed when He came to earth the first time, He will come as a conquering king the second time. With a crown and a scepter, and those who harmed Him and did not repent shall rise and see Him and weep. Justice will come. Death will not prevent justice. There will be a time when those who have harmed others will be held accountable. And here is our patience and trust in God: No unmerciful man or woman who unapologetically finds strength in harming others will go unpunished.

We should be sad for them, for the loss they will suffer, for their stupidity in clinging to wrongs. And those victimized will go free, and God promises: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev.7:16-17)

God does not side with cruelty, He has allowed it to exist for a brief moment in the history of the universe to try to help mankind be saved and to have witnesses against ever allowing such a society to arise again.

For those who think God asks of us patience and long-suffering He Himself does not have to carry, they should know God asks of us what He Himself has gone through.

It would have been easy for God to eliminate his enemy, Satan, in the beginning. But he could not because no one would understand why, as he just seemed like a concerned, loving creature speaking on everyone's behalf. Satan appeared to be working for the good of everyone. God knew that a quick solution would not end the problem. It would just add more problems. God had to be patient and suffer the lies and attacks Satan did. It took long before heaven realized who Satan really was, before they understood they had been lied to and manipulated and that he was doing it for himself and not them (Rev.12.9&12)

Likewise, Christ came to earth to tell everyone the truth, but Satan took advantage of his power and caused him to be constantly persecuted throughout his life. He was attempted killed from he was born and several times as an adult. In the end, he was tortured and killed.

Christ endured it to expose everyone who Satan was and what his agenda was. He had to allow him to play out his evil upon someone who had done him no wrong, upon the one who had given him life. Satan, who claimed to be a defender of freedom, would not allow Christ free speech. He would not allow Christ's followers to practice their belief in freedom. Satan proved by all his actions that all his good words were just for show; he himself was a cruel dictator with all the characteristics he had claimed God had. God had not killed him when he first rebelled and even went to war in heaven, but Satan was quick to eliminate Christ, who only spoke the truth and did good.

Christ was what Satan would like to claim to be, but isn't. Because God endured all this, He could, with the universe's blessing, judge the guilty. Satan exposed himself and his true ideology slowly over time, but even more during his attack on Christ. Satan could not win over Christ in heaven; He was too powerful, but when Christ came as a man to save mankind, Satan used his power to try to destroy him here.

In heaven, Satan could claim to be suppressed, as he was outnumbered and weaker. He could claim victimhood and gain sympathy that way. But when Christ cleverly came as a human, in human flesh, here on earth, Satan was stronger physically; he controlled the kingdoms of the world according to himself (Matt.4:8-9). Yet now that the tables had seemingly been turned, Satan turned out to be no victim. He took advantage straight away and went to destroy, even Christ as a baby. Before Christ had grown to speak His first words and do His first deeds, Satan wanted him dead. Satan became a contrast to what God had done for him. Evil men and angels can say all the right words and claim to be what they desire to be viewed as, but their actions will expose them every time. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt.7:20)

God allows it not out of weakness, but because it is the only way to expose the truth and people's character so that they can be judged or receive mercy accordingly. If one man has one victim, it might be questioned if the victim caused it in some way. If someone has a repeated pattern and continues to harm others in the same way, it is evident who is at fault and why. The first victim is no longer doubted. Time is a great tool for exposing lies.

God asks His people to endure difficulties and even persecution and bad treatment, but not to accept it or bring it upon themselves. He said clearly, "If you are persecuted in one city, go to the next". Do not stay suppressed if you can obtain freedom elsewhere.

And Christians must not claim victimhood. We can suffer oppression if we are strong enough to tolerate it by choice, as an attempt to save others, even our transgressors. If it is not appreciated, we need to move on, or their evil will also destroy us. The Bible is clear that some are spiritually, mentally, and physically weaker than others and that it is the stronger Christians' responsibility to care for the weaker and to take on the brave tasks (Romans 15:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Isaiah 35:3; Psalm 41:1)

God does not call for everyone to stand in front of the spiritual war. He is not unreasonable, and it is a choice. However, regardless of what task we have, whether small or big, we are to be spiritual warriors, not victims.

We know the stakes; we make decisions based on them. Christianity is not victimhood; it is freedom. Freedom in God's image. When God looks for His image in us, He wants to see that determination to bring justice, which He has. To help those who are helpless, care for the sick, release those who are suppressed, and show mercy and tolerance if there is hope of regret and conversion. We are to handle evil without becoming a reflection of it. We are not to take revenge on them or subdue us under them; rather, the third option is to show goodness and strength. To inspire people to break the chain, to not

pay sins forward, and to not let others' bad behavior, although it harms us, change us. Rather, keep an eye on Christ.

If we do this, we are free. “For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed” (Jas.1:6)

We will be triggered and tempted. But we give Christ our revenge. We cannot do this while claiming victimhood for then we spend our lives holding every person we meet accountable for a sin they did not commit. Someone who is victimized is under the control of another. If we are down for a moment, we must rise again. If we don't, we cannot give the world an alternative to paying sin forward. We can't be the solution if we are part of the problem.

If you have scars, consider them evidence against sin. If you have mental scars, again, they are evidence against sin. The pain you feel in your heart when you have been wronged or targeted is God's evidence against sin. God will do you right in His own time.

So, Paul advises us to think of ourselves as warriors in a war and not as victims. He wrote these words while in prison for preaching the gospel and being hindered from speaking openly:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:10-17)

Paul further said: “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph 6:19-20).

An ambassador in bonds! Paul was a free man even in prison, for his heart and mind were free. He had inner peace. He still loved.

No matter what has happened in the past or is happening right now, letting it control us and who we are and what kind of Christian we are is only giving our freedom to our transgressors. We will harm ourselves and others and never be free.

God knows what you have been through. He has seen it and has recorded it. Every scar, every word, is noted. He says, "Revenge is mine" (Romans 12:19-21)

He tells us to be bold and strong in Him. He tells us to be free in Him.

Afterword

The way to peace and recovery requires a willingness to leave victimhood behind. It can be tempting for those dealing with people who are stuck in victimhood after long-term trauma or childhood trauma to tell them to “move on”. This is not helpful. They cannot just move on. No one's body is designed or works that way. Not even God can order a man to “move on”.

This book is not meant to inspire anyone to meet a victim in such a way or for a victim to harshly say it to themselves. The point of the book is to inspire and help start the steps of recovery by making some important decisions. It is not done in one day, and some scars will never go away.

Even for the one who chose to leave victimhood behind, occasionally triggers will still come throughout life. Some will come surprisingly, and it will be too late to deal with them in a healthy way there and then.

You cannot command anyone “to move on” or “cheer up”. These words are fruitless in themselves.

No victim deserves this kind of disrespect.

Emotional scars must go through a process to be healed, even for Christians. Pretending to be fine when we are not won't make it fine. It is just denial. God's solution is not to repress memories, but to face them with honesty and deal with them accordingly. To place blame where it belongs, we must understand that sin was committed.

It is tempting for the family and friends of a victim to ask them to just forget it happened and move on. At worst, what the victim does is pretend to have forgotten it, and they are stuck in a private mental prison as a result. God has created us in such a way that sin does not go away until it has been dealt with according to his laws. Silencing a victim will only cause further damage. If a family wishes for a problem to go away, the problem must be dealt with.

Too often, dysfunctional families blame the victim, or at least they divide the blame between the victim and the family member who committed the acts. This will never create peace or healing; it can create the illusion of it, but not the God given healing.

Blame must be put in the right place for sin to be forgiven, even by God. A victim will be hurt unless they can be heard and understood.

The suggested training used in this book is not to be used as an accusation against a victim for remaining in victimhood. Or to put blame on a victim for still struggling. Trauma healing cannot be forced upon anyone or used to guilt-trip them into thinking they are the cause of their problems.

Healing is different for everyone, and many things must come together for the journey to start.

Unmerciful approaches from family, friends, and church members can at worst prevent healing rather than help it. The right way to approach a long-term trauma survivor is to show compassion and inspire them. Allowing them to speak if they need to. Inviting them to activities that will help them. You can do little things. Instead of advising them to exercise, ask if they want to go for a walk with you. Instead of telling them to eat healthier, invite them over for a healthy dinner or to cook with you. The point is

to replace words with practical help. Too often, people think they “help” when they throw a lot of advice at someone struggling, and then they leave and feel better about themselves for having given the advice. This rarely helps anyone feel better, except the person giving the advice.

If you feel helpless, do something practical or helpful instead.

Inspire the change; don’t push it upon them. Don’t be condescending or impatient. The victim is not less intelligent than you, he or she just speaks “a different language”.

Only when a long-term victim feels safe can they start their journey. Guilt-tripping, demanding, threats, and similar approaches will not help them get to the starting point.

Demanding they forgive before the sins are correctly understood or dealt with is also wrong.

Everyone needs different things and will struggle with forgiving until they understand what has happened in the right light. It can take time because victims are often confused and struggle with displaced blame. If you want to help a long-term trauma victim, just be their friend without letting them exploit you or feel your friendship is charity.

If you make it a charity, it can inspire a long-term victim to feel the need to be sick to be noticed and cared about. It might lead them into a negative loop.

Instead of giving “good advice,” invite them to do something constructive together with you.

Ask more than once. A trauma victim struggles in many more ways than what is shown, and might need time to say yes or multiple chances to say yes. Many victims are careful and uncertain about themselves and others and need time to respond. Don’t be afraid to invite again, even if you get a “no” or a rejection the first time.

Know that there are some who are so ruined and destroyed by the things that have happened to them that they might not ever fully recover. Each case and situation is different. Some are sicker than others. Some do not show; they may appear normal, while with others it is obvious. This does not mean the one who is visibly sick is sicker than the one whose illness does not show.

Most people who end their lives are those who keep all their feelings to themselves. They learned not to be a bother and that no one would care, which is why they pretend everything is fine. They think the world is better off without them. Numerous people who end their lives leave people shocked. The people around them say they seemed to be smiling and happy most of the time and they did not see it coming.

Making people suppress or be quiet about their hurt will perhaps give the perpetrator and their family peace, but it will slowly destroy the victim from the inside.

Sin cannot be covered up; it can only be moved to the right person. Then that person must move it or give it to Christ. Sin cannot be hidden or destroyed by silence, violence, or manipulation.

Thus, “helping” victims by telling them to “get over it” and “move on” can potentially damage the victim and even kill them over time.

We should not compare the suffering of one with that of another. People have different strengths and upbringings. Some can handle plenty of difficulties, while others seem to handle very little. Behind that lie cognitive abilities, additional trauma you don't know about, genetics, or a weak bodily physique. We must not judge two people who seem to have suffered the same thing for handling it differently. No one's situation is the same.

The Bible is clear that the stronger are to care for the weaker. There is so much we do not know or understand about others. Because we have learned one secret, that does not mean we know them all. We do not need to understand others completely to be kind and helpful to them. To be a Christian.

Helping long-term victims is not about judging, demanding, or advising. It is about being present and standing by their side. Giving them your time. This will help them feel wanted and valuable, and these same emotions will inspire them to value themselves and want to be braver.

Using Christ and the Bible to silence a victim is another form of abuse. Christ wants to set people free, not destroy them. The Bible is clear when it comes to sin: it must be atoned for in one way or another. The law says there should be compensation if there is damage. It is up to the victim alone to forgive.

If a Christian family has managed to silence their victim and pretend things have not happened, they have only put themselves in a situation where God must one day judge them without being able to offer them atonement. If He does not, heaven will not be paradise for the victims, as the treatment by their families will continue there. The lies would continue there. Christ's mercy would be used to prove the victim wrong. Calling a victim a liar to save face will only cause you to lose face on judgment day, as this will leave you standing dressed in your own filthy righteousness.

Any victim who follows Christ and has taken refuge with Christ should know that Christ is on their side against all sin, He will accept no excuse for any sin. If your transgressor is unapologetic, then He will judge them for you.

“And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isa 25:9)

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne.

.. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.’

Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’

And the King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’ (Matt.25.31, 34-40)

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity” (1Co 13:11-13)

