

# **Yahweh Is Good to All Men**

## ***Being Simply Christian***

By

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\*\*\*This work has been condensed and edited with the help of ChatGPT tools. The original book, “Yahweh Is Good to All Men”, has not been formally published. This is the first work submitted for public consumption. All scripture verses are taken from the WEB version of the Bible. The “Works Cited” page includes all reference and resource material used in the original version of the book and are good for the reader's further research.

## ***Chapter 1: Thoughts on Hell: Introduction***

God's Gift to Humanity: Hell or Reconciliation? is a book I first authored and self-published in 2018. It was far from a best seller—at the time of this writing, I purchased all but two of the copies sold. One was bought by the man I call my preacher, though we have never met face-to-face. The other was purchased by a friend.

Even so, researching and writing that book has been an ongoing blessing for me. It is not an academic dissertation, nor is it a polished literary work. It is the culmination of several years of sincere study, and I believe it reflects the work of the Holy Spirit in me. Through that process, I came to more deeply appreciate the absolute and irrefutable doctrine of God's impartial grace as revealed in Holy Scripture. God's Gift examines the doctrine of eternal conscious torment from the perspective of those who teach it. Their own words describe the torments they attach to their understanding of "hell." Their traditions outline unimaginable tortures inflicted upon humanity by an angry God. These descriptions are often fantastical, yet they are granted enormous credibility.

Within God's Gift I also explore multiple Scriptures that reveal God's relentless love and illuminate the beauty of His impartial grace. Impartial grace is anathema to traditional Christendom. Advocating it comes at a cost. Many who defend the doctrine of eternal conscious torment consider impartial grace to be heresy or blasphemy, and they do not hesitate to mock or condemn those who embrace it. Yet impartial grace is solidly grounded in Holy Scripture, while eternal conscious torment is a doctrine shaped and sustained by human tradition. Through improper interpretation of Scripture, a repugnant teaching developed—a teaching that took root around 500 AD and has since become deeply embedded in the traditions of men. "Hell" and "eternal conscious torment" have become interchangeable terms describing an unending existence reserved for those whom God supposedly hates.

Tradition has long been used to separate Christians from non-Christians and, more tragically, Christians from one another. Traditions breed disagreements, form denominations, and create boundaries that fracture Christ's body. Denominations split over disputes rooted not in Scripture, but in tradition. Many defend their creeds with passion—even hostility—while ridiculing the beliefs of others. Some condemn entire branches of Christianity as heretical or unworthy. The divisions are many, and often bitter. Yet across these diverse traditions, one thing is almost universally affirmed: the doctrine of eternal conscious torment.

Tradition also places limits on God's saving grace. It creates conditions of "acceptable" behavior and adds burdens that Scripture does not require. Traditionalists argue fiercely in defense of their doctrines, especially the doctrine of God's supposed eternal wrath. They often overlook the clear testimony of Scripture and instead construct conditions to "prove" their views.

Tradition qualifies people—other brothers and sisters in Christ—as either truly saved or not. It sets rules that determine who is accepted in the larger community and who is not. In such an environment, it becomes difficult simply to be Christian.

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment is a vicious one. It describes an everlasting fire administered by God solely to punish unbelievers, and its defenders insist it is divinely inspired. Over centuries, the doctrine has become normalized, conventional, and widely accepted as truth. Today it is orthodox, codified in most Christian denominations and congregations around the world.

## Conclusion

As I continue this journey of study and reflection, my hope is simple: to look beyond tradition and return to the heart of Scripture. My desire is that all who read these words might reconsider long-held assumptions and discover, as I did, the depth of God's impartial and unwavering love for all humanity.

## **Chapter 2: Traditions, Traditions, Traditions...**

The “traditions of men” are, as the phrase suggests, the products of men. Some traditions may be harmless or even helpful, but like all human efforts, they are fallible. Over time many traditions have been elevated to the status of absolutes. The doctrine of eternal conscious torment is one of these. Since around 500 A.D., this doctrine has been taught with great passion. Denominational leaders have advanced it to such a degree that their congregations accept it without question. Traditions elevate Pharisees—those who sit in religious authority and claim expertise over the faith. Leaders often promote doctrines and exercise authority in ways that diminish the Word of God, making Scripture mean less than it says.

### **Jesus and the Traditions of the Elders**

In Mark chapters 6 and 7, we see a clear example of how tradition can overshadow truth. Jesus sent His disciples across the sea ahead of Him. Strong winds and troubled waters frightened them, but Jesus came to them walking on the sea. After calming the storm, they reached Gennesaret and came ashore. Jesus was quickly recognized, and crowds gathered around Him. The sick were brought to Him, and throughout the day He walked through towns and villages, healing all who came. The disciples were with Him the whole time—likely hungry and dirty from travel.

Then the Pharisees arrived. They saw the disciples eating bread with unwashed hands and were offended. They had developed a tradition of ceremonial cleansing before meals, and the disciples’ failure to observe it alarmed them.

They asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with unwashed hands?” (Mark 7:5) Jesus responded with a rebuke wrapped in Scripture: “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites... ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For you set aside the commandment of God, and hold tightly to the tradition of men...” (Mark 7:6–13)

### **A Pharisaical Tradition Exposed**

Wayne Jackson of the Christian Courier explains these verses well in his article, “What Is the Meaning of ‘Corban’?” He describes the arrogance of the traditionalist Pharisees:

This ceremonial cleansing was not part of Moses’ law but a human tradition. When the Pharisees accused Jesus’ disciples of violating it, they believed they had grounds for an indictment. But Jesus, knowing their hearts, turned the table on them.

Their “Corban” tradition allowed them to declare portions of their wealth dedicated to God, preventing its use for worldly responsibilities—including caring for aging parents. This directly contradicted God’s command to honor father and mother. Jesus made it clear: their tradition nullified the Word of God. Jackson calls these traditionalist elites “covetous” and “ungrateful,” noting that they manipulated traditions to benefit themselves.

### **The Broader Problem of Tradition**

Kenneth and Brian Hoeck of Truth On the Web Ministries explore this subject extensively in their article, “Scripture & Tradition of God Vs. Tradition of Men Over Scripture.” Their study highlights the deep divisions between the Catholic and Protestant churches.

The Hoecks argue that tradition appears in Scripture in two forms: First, the traditions of men—those that nullify Scripture or lack biblical support. Second, the traditions of God—those aligned with and recorded in Scripture. They conclude with clear guidance: “Any traditions that cannot be clearly proven out of the Bible are suspect... Scripture has God’s own authority... The Bible is the only reliable source to prove a doctrine... We are admonished not to go beyond what is written.”

## Conclusion

Traditions shape beliefs, worship, and the way Christians relate to one another. But every tradition must be weighed against the truth of Scripture. Any doctrine—especially one as severe as eternal conscious torment—that cannot be proven through the Word of God alone deserves careful scrutiny. Scripture stands above tradition, and God's truth remains the only reliable foundation for faith.

### **Chapter 3: Relentless Love, Impartial Grace**

Dr. Otis A. Skinner published a work titled “A Series of Sermons in Defence of Universal Salvation,” printed by Abel Tompkins in Boston in 1842. Google has kindly digitized this work into the public domain, and this chapter is largely based on one of those sermons. Dr. Skinner advocates what he calls the doctrine of “impartial grace.” It is a doctrine that magnifies the mercy of God and demonstrates His overwhelming love for all. Today, we might call this universal reconciliation.

In his day, Dr. Skinner was alarmed at “the untiring efforts made in this city [Boston], during the past winter, against the doctrine of ‘impartial grace.’” Those who promoted the doctrine of eternal conscious torment attacked universal reconciliation and its advocates with harshness. He described these attacks as “unchristian measures employed to cast reproach upon its advocates.” The spirit of that assault is similar to the charges the Pharisees brought against Christ’s disciples in Mark 6–7. Pharisees need their traditions.

More than 175 years have passed since Dr. Skinner wrote those words, yet the hostility toward the doctrine of universal reconciliation has not faded. Advocates of eternal conscious torment often hold deep enmity toward those who challenge their tradition. Impartial grace and eternal conscious torment cannot both be true. One of them is a lie.

Dr. Skinner passionately embraced universal reconciliation and felt compelled to defend it against the reproach poured upon “his brethren.” He desired to expose false doctrines—eternal conscious torment among them—so that “the world may be saved from those false” teachings, and to teach universal reconciliation in a way that would “bring many to rejoice in the goodness of God.”

#### **Eternal Conscious Torment Cannot Be Reconciled with Divine Goodness**

“Yahweh is good to all. His tender mercies are over all his works.” (Psalm 145:9, WEB) The doctrine of eternal conscious torment is dreadful. It is a doctrine of fear and retribution. Among the many doctrines found within Christendom, this one is especially horrendous. Nearly every denomination that calls itself Christian has, in some measure, adopted it as truth and often views it as beyond dispute. The torments assigned to the reprobate in this doctrine are, by any honest reading, evil in nature. Yet the doctrine is adamantly defended by men and women who are otherwise sincere and well-meaning. It has become deeply entrenched in denominations and congregations worldwide and is often regarded as essential to “orthodox” belief.

Advocates of eternal conscious torment often claim, as Dr. Skinner quotes, that it is “one of the most efficient means, furnished by Heaven, for the prevention of crime, and the promotion of virtue.” In reality, the doctrine has not proven itself effective in stopping crime or promoting genuine virtue. In contrast, “impartial grace” is embraced by millions of Christians around the world. Impartial grace—or universal reconciliation—directly contradicts and negates the doctrine of eternal conscious torment. No wonder, then, that universal reconciliation is viewed as anathema by lovers of the traditional doctrine.

In Dr. Skinner’s day, he saw signs of hope. He observed that more and more people were embracing universal reconciliation and that fewer were convinced by the old terrors of hell. In some countries—Germany, France, and England—hell-fire preaching had almost gone dormant. Dr. Skinner hoped the same would happen in America, believing that people were growing weary of a doctrine that “reeks of evil.” He noted that sermons full of fire and damnation appeared to be decreasing in frequency and

intensity. Where preachers once spoke of a “burning hell,” “almighty vengeance,” “arrows of infinite wrath,” and “thunderbolts of an enraged God,” the language gradually softened to phrases such as “the happiness of the future state” or “the stings of conscience.”

In our own time, however, the vigor of hell-sermons has returned in many circles. The fierceness of God’s supposed eternal wrath is again proclaimed in pulpits, and the doctrine of eternal conscious torment is codified in creeds and church by-laws. Still, Dr. Skinner believed the leaven of truth was working. He hoped—and we may still hope—that the doctrine of eternal conscious torment will one day be “exterminated from the Christian world.” He called it a “mammoth error” and urged believers “to persevere in our exertions, to go forward in the work of opposing error and defending truth.” He compiled his sermons to expose error and proclaim that God will reconcile all people to Himself, bringing the matter into the light for the Christian world to consider.

Dr. Skinner’s sermons show that eternal conscious torment “is irreconcilable with Divine goodness.” He pointed out that Christians are broadly divided into two major doctrinal camps regarding this issue in his time: Calvinists and Arminians. In recent generations, a third group has become more visible: advocates of conditional immortality or annihilationism.

All three systems—Calvinist, Arminian, and annihilationist—limit the number of those who will ultimately be saved, and so Dr. Skinner appropriately calls them “limitarian” doctrines. These groups disagree on many points, but most are united in affirming some form of eternal punishment for the majority of humanity. The tradition of eternal conscious torment is common ground among them.

### **Divine Goodness**

Dr. Skinner cites Dr. John Gill’s description of Divine goodness, summarizing three key characteristics: First, Its Source – There is no cause of goodness outside of God. We love Him because He first loved us. Second, Its Immutability – God’s goodness is like Himself: “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” It does not fluctuate, increase, or decrease. There are no interruptions or impediments to that goodness. And Third, Its Permanence – The goodness of God endures forever. It can never be dissolved, nor can anything separate us from it. To these, Dr. Skinner adds that Divine goodness is infinitely great. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39, WEB)

Nothing can separate us from His love. Nothing. Further, Divine goodness is impartial. His tender mercies are over all. He is good to all. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God didn’t send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.”(John 3:16–17, WEB) Divine goodness is free, immutable, eternal, infinite, and impartial. The doctrine of eternal conscious torment stands in opposition to these attributes. Universal reconciliation, on the other hand, explicitly affirms them. It is indeed a doctrine of “impartial grace.”

### **Calvinism Cannot Be Reconciled with Divine Goodness**

Calvinism teaches that God has, from eternity, chosen some to enjoy everlasting life with Him while leaving the rest to suffer eternal conscious torment. According to this theology, it is God’s will that not all be saved. The majority of humanity is ordained for eternal misery, and there is nothing anyone can do to change this decree. Calvinist scholars say that the condemned are “reprobates,” and that their destiny was fixed “before the foundation of the world.” Dr. Skinner asks whether these people are

condemned in anticipation of what their character would be. God created them—did He create them with a propensity to sin and no remedy for their condition?

John Calvin, in his “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” wrote that those whom God “passes by” are reprobated simply because it pleases Him to exclude them from the inheritance He gives His children. God’s glory, in this view, is displayed both in saving some and in eternally condemning others. Many Calvinists, historically and today, have defended this as a scriptural doctrine. They insist that those in hell are not there by accident, yet they also teach that God is glorified in their damnation. This raises obvious questions about Divine goodness, impartiality, and love.

Dr. John Piper, a prominent contemporary theologian, has addressed the question, “How does it glorify God to predestine people to hell?” He argues that no one in hell is there undeservedly, and that those in heaven will glorify God all the more when they realize their own salvation could justly have been otherwise. The saved, seeing how narrowly they “escaped,” will praise God for His selective mercy—thus, God is glorified.

The Westminster Confession, in its chapter “Of the Last Judgment,” summarizes this view by saying that the final day will manifest “the glory of His mercy” in the eternal salvation of the elect and “the glory of His justice” in the damnation of the reprobate. In this system, God is glorified both by saving some and by eternally condemning others. Reprobation—endless death and torment—is presented as a necessary counterpart to election. Dr. Skinner rightly observes that such a doctrine is “opposed to impartial goodness.” If God is good to all, He cannot, at the same time, deliberately create some solely for eternal ruin.

### **“Yahweh Is Good to All”**

How can we honestly say, with the Psalmist, that God is “good to all” if He consigns the majority of His creation to eternal conscious torment? Calvinistic predestination insists that God grants saving favor to only a few. Truly impartial goodness would impart love and mercy to all. As Dr. Skinner puts it, God “must deal by all alike and grant to all the same favors and mercies.” Under the traditional systems of belief, the elect receive all spiritual advantages: the enjoyments of life, the benefits of the Gospel, the presence of the Spirit, the promises of heaven. Christ is said to have died for them in a special, saving sense. The reprobate, on the other hand, is not truly favored. Being given life is not a blessing but part of a curse. Dr. Skinner remarks that, for the reprobate, even the blessings of life are curses, for they only serve to increase the misery of eternal punishment.

What genuine blessing belongs to those whom God has supposedly created solely as vessels of wrath? None. Existence itself becomes “an endless curse.” If this is so, Dr. Skinner asks, how can we say God is impartially good? If He is good to the elect, He cannot be good to the non-elect. One group is raised to eternal joy in His presence; the other is cast off into everlasting torment. This stands directly against Scripture: “Yahweh is good to all.” Calvinism’s doctrine of election fails the test of impartial goodness.

### **Arminianism Cannot Be Reconciled with Divine Goodness**

Dr. Skinner sums up Arminian theology this way: “God is good. Guided by goodness, he placed all men in a situation where they might be saved; and, therefore, if they are not, it is no fault of His; so that those who are lost have none but themselves to blame.” Arminianism seeks to defend God’s justice and goodness by assigning responsibility for damnation entirely to human choice. God offers salvation to all, but only those who accept that offer are saved. On the surface, this appears fair and even generous. Dr. Skinner, however, finds this theory “vastly more defective” than Calvinism. Arminian preachers often say that God’s goodness can be seen in all creation: in the stars, the earth, the beauty of nature,



and the blessings of life. They insist that God is not partial to any person or nation, and they reject the idea that God created some specifically for hell. In their view, eternal conscious torment is the result of human refusal, not Divine decree. But is this truly impartial?

Every human being is shaped by circumstances beyond their control: Some are born into peace, others into war. Some are raised in loving homes, others in violence and neglect. Some enjoy wealth and education, others face deep poverty and ignorance. Some grow up hearing the Gospel clearly, others never hear it at all. The conditions into which we are born are uneven. Some people have “advantages vastly superior” to others, including moral teaching, access to Scripture, and exposure to the Gospel. If salvation depends on hearing and responding rightly, then those with greater advantages “stand a much better chance of salvation.” Many, especially among the so-called “heathen,” may never truly hear or understand the Gospel. They die “ignorant of Him of whom they have never heard” and are then, according to this theology, consigned to an eternity of torment.

This makes God’s goodness partial in practice, however impartial it may sound in theory. If eternal destinies differ with such infinite consequence, largely because of circumstances God Himself ordained, then His goodness cannot honestly be called impartial. Arminian theology claims that “all may be saved,” and that if they are not, the blame rests solely on man. But this shrinks the greatness of God’s goodness and ignores the unequal conditions in which people live and die.

### **God’s Immutable, Relentless Love**

Let us agree that God is love; that He is all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-powerful; and that His goodness is perfect. Nothing we do can change His character. Dr. Skinner reminds us: God’s goodness is part of His nature, not something produced by human virtue or even by the death of Christ. The action of Divine goodness does not depend on anything we do. God pursues His purposes of love when we are sinful just as surely as when we are virtuous. His love is uncaused by us and unearned by us.

Sin does not prevent God from bringing us into the enjoyment of His grace; rather, it is precisely His goodness that destroys sin and subdues the heart so that grace may be received. God is Sovereign the moment He creates. His goodness is perfect over His creation from that moment and never changes. All mankind dies, but He does not abandon them to death. In Christ, He raises, restores, and reconciles.

Scripture overwhelmingly supports the magnitude and universality of His saving purpose: Christ tastes death “for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). God “desires all people to be saved” and Christ “gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:1–7). Christ came “to save sinners,” and Paul calls himself the chief (1 Timothy 1:12–15). Through Christ, God will “reconcile all things to Himself” (Colossians 1:16–20). God is love, and He sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice “for our sins” (1 John 4:7–12). Christ must reign until every enemy is under His feet and “God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24–28). - Jesus promises, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). These testimonies reveal a God whose goodness is free, immutable, eternal, infinite, and impartial. A God whose purpose is not to torment some forever, but to save and reconcile all.

Dr. Skinner concludes that Scripture teaches exactly this: “The free, immutable, eternal, infinite and impartial goodness of God will save all men from sin, and exalt them to immortal glory.” The theologies of Calvin and Arminius, as they are commonly taught, stand opposed to these attributes. Under the light of God’s Word and the character of His relentless, impartial love, their doctrines of eternal conscious torment are exposed as false.

## Closing

In the end, the choice before us is not between a harsh God and a soft God, but between the traditions of men and the testimony of Scripture. If God is truly and eternally good, if His love is genuinely impartial and His purpose is to be “all in all,” then we need not cling to doctrines that make Him appear weak, divided, or cruel. Instead, we can rest in the relentless love and impartial grace revealed in Christ Jesus—a grace that will, in God’s own time, reconcile all things to Himself and exalt all His children to immortal glory.

## **Chapter 4: Reconciliation Among Brothers**

The doctrine of impartial grace is the truth. My life changed the moment it became clear that the doctrine of eternal conscious torment could not possibly be true. The change has been liberating. Instead of encouraging others to believe in a traditional facsimile of Christ, I now preach a loving Christ—One who reconciles all men to our Father, regardless of their station. I have been freed to proclaim unconditional love.

A local newspaper once posted a poem submitted by a constituent:

### **I am a Christian**

When I say that “I am a Christian,” I am not shouting that “I am clean living.” I am whispering, “I was lost, but now I’m found and forgiven.”

When I say “I am a Christian,” I don’t speak of this with pride. I’m confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my Guide.

When I say “I am a Christian,” I’m not trying to be strong. I am professing that I am weak and need His strength to carry on.

When I say “I am a Christian,” I am not bragging of success. I’m admitting I have failed and need God to clean up my mess.

When I say “I am a Christian,” I am not claiming to be perfect. My flaws are far too visible, but God believes I’m worth it.

When I say “I am a Christian,” I still feel the sting of pain. I have my share of heartaches, so I call upon His Name.

When I say “I am a Christian,” I am not holier than thou. I’m just a simple sinner who received God’s good grace somehow!

Advocating the doctrine of eternal conscious torment is not easy. It is hinged to nearly every other Christian tradition, and it is often an obstacle to being simply Christian.

### **Simply Christian**

Dr. Mark Copeland, Minister of God’s Word and prolific sermon writer, provides free outlines for others. In “Challenges Confronting the Church,” he rightly warns about the factional nature of denominations and congregations. Traditions shape hearts and minds more deeply than many realize. Often, the tradition becomes more important than the One to whom it points. If Christ is the center of Christianity, how can there be so many divisions, creeds, and rituals dividing us?

Christians everywhere confess absolute truths: God loved us before we knew Him, He created humanity in His image, He is love, He is immutable, He is Sovereign over all things, and His plan will not fail. Yet, despite these shared convictions, we divide over traditions.

We segregate ourselves into denominations organized by rituals and customs. But to what end? Which assembly is “right”? Which rituals honor God? Believers gather in thousands of denominations, each convinced of its own correctness. Each believer knows he is a child of God, yet we remain separated. What removes the barriers between those who claim the Most High God as Father?

It is possible to be simply Christian. But this requires humility—setting aside discomfort over unfamiliar worship practices, abandoning judgment, and obeying the “Royal Law”: Love one another as yourself. Paul reminds us: “For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus... there is neither Jew nor Greek... slave nor free... male nor female... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

(Galatians 3:23–29)

Mary Fairchild notes that more than 1,000 Christian branches exist in the U.S. alone. “Christianity,” she says, “is a severely divided faith.” Denominations serve the needs of tradition. Traditions become tares. Loyalty to tradition becomes idolatry when it overshadows God’s love. Paul pleads: “Walk worthily... with humility... eager to keep the unity of the Spirit... One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.” (Ephesians 4:1–10)

There may be thousands of denominations, but there is only one faith.

### **The Problem of Denominations**

A denomination is, by definition, a division. Believers should avoid affiliations that divide Christ's Body. Every denomination functions under a human governing authority, despite having no Scriptural warrant to do so. Scripture shows independent, local congregations, not global or regional governing bodies.

Christ is the sole authority over His church. Apostles held authority only in the early church, and they were not replaced. Denominational oversight usurps Christ’s authority. The mere existence of denominations contradicts the unity Christ prayed for. Jesus prayed: “That they may all be one... even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.” (John 17:20–25)

Traditions divide. Christ unites. Christ commands: “I command these things to you, that you may love one another.” (John 15:17–26) Christ is the Vine, we are the branches. There is only one Vine. Traditions convince believers that their “part of the vine” is the truest or the purest. This is not Scriptural.

Paul admonishes believers who follow Paul, Apollos, or Cephas: “Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:10–14) The answer is an emphatic NO. Denominations contradict this truth. Sectarian loyalty is carnal. Paul again warns: “For when there is jealousy and strife and factions, are you not fleshly?” (1 Corinthians 3:1–4) Christ broke down the wall of division between Jew and Gentile. Yet believers rebuild walls between themselves through denominational divisions. (Ephesians 2:11–22)

Do you look down on believers who worship differently? I have. I repented. Christ tore down the wall; I rebuilt it. I was wrong. Christ reconciles all in ONE body.

New believers often turn away because denominations confuse them. “Christians can't even agree with one another,” they say. Non-Christians use denominational division as proof against the Gospel. Yet great leaders of the past begged believers not to take their names: Martin Luther: “Let us abolish all party names and call ourselves Christians.” John Wesley wished the word “Methodist” would vanish from the earth. Charles Spurgeon longed for the day when “there will not be a Baptist living.” But denominations have increased, not diminished. Still, there is hope.

Millions of believers are quietly leaving denominational structures. They are seeking Christ in liberty, united in love and purpose. Paul writes: “Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind... considering others better than yourself.” (Philippians 2:1–4) Denominationalism resists this. Minds harden. Hearts close. Traditions obscure the Light.

Christ’s Church does not need rescuing. He is sovereign. He knows the end. Our task is to love—fully, relentlessly, impartially. The veils of tradition hide the Lamp, but the Lamp continues to shine.

## Conclusion

Unity is ours in Christ Jesus. The divisions of denominations, fueled by traditions, do not reflect His will. He calls us to love one another, to walk humbly, and to set aside every barrier that keeps His Body fractured. May we have the courage to reject traditions that divide and embrace the impartial grace that unites all God's children into one family, one faith, one Body under One Lord—Christ Jesus.

## **Chapter 5: *Being Simply Christian***

Every denomination, congregation, or assembly is made up of believers who, often without realizing it, are striving to be something more complicated than simply Christian. Their denominations establish traditions, creeds, rites, and rituals. Adherence to these becomes necessary for full inclusion in that body of believers. Traditions add rules and assign levels of compliance. In many traditional congregations, being simply Christian is made complex, complicated, and nearly unattainable.

“Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, ‘Rejoice!’ Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4–7, WEB) A life of peace beyond anything we can imagine is ours now. All that is asked of us is to rejoice in the Lord and to show gentleness to all. Peace comes as a simple matter of thankful prayer and honest requests. Christ is with us even now. He “is at hand.” He is not only seated at the right hand of the Father; He lives in us as well. The peace of God is His gift. He shields us and guards our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus. Even so, the ways of the world stand constantly before us, enticing and tempting us. I am convinced that nearly all, if not all, who are still reading this book have at least been tempted by the flesh. And I suspect most of us, in one way or another, have taken a bite of that fruit. That is not an exaggeration. “Concerning the Good News, they are enemies for your sake. But concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sake. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they may also obtain mercy. For God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all. Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!” (Romans 11:28–33, WEB)

This is Good News. It is the Gospel. Here we see impartial grace in the light of Christ’s Gospel. God has consigned all to disobedience so that He might have mercy on all. His love is boundless and relentless, far deeper than our traditions allow. He is benevolent without end. He is good. His grace is impartial.

His mercy will be over all. It is the same mercy He showed to the disciples and early believers. It is the same mercy He gives to traditionalists and to all others. Traditions—especially the doctrine of eternal conscious torment—deny our Father’s power and intent to reconcile all.

Traditions and denominations often stir up the sin in us. They can extinguish the liberty we have in Him. They separate, divide, and label. Denominations create anxiety and exploit believers. Traditions demand qualified performance and measure adherence to doctrines. “Keep these rules,” we are told, “and you may belong here.”

We worry about our children, parents, jobs, churches, and spiritual standing. Our doctrines are challenged. Our sense of security wavers. Doubt and anxiety become serious challenges to our trust in His sovereignty. At times, our worry suggests that God does not know what He is doing. We surrender very little and feed the fires of worry. We fail to hear His command to love one another. Traditions and denominations fuel these anxieties; the Word of God does not.

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow let’s go into this city, and spend a year there, trade, and make a profit.’ Whereas you don’t know what your life will be like tomorrow. For what is your life?”

For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will both live, and do this or that.' But now you glory in your boasting. All such boasting is evil. To him therefore who knows to do good, and doesn't do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:13–17, WEB) We are called to live according to what God commands. We know what is good in His sight. To refuse to do the good we know is to sin. We know His command to love one another, yet too often good men do not love—and that is sin. Without God, the best efforts and plans of men are fruitless. In their vanity, they will reap what they sow. Our harvest will also match what we sow. We are of God. We are to abide in Him. Traditions often work against that abiding; they can negate the command to love unconditionally.

"Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man doesn't remain in me, he is thrown out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you." (John 15:4–7, WEB) Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we will only be worthy witnesses when our hearts, words, thoughts, and deeds are in Him. If we step away from the Word of God to follow fear, we poison our portion of the branch. Our branch will not bear testimony to the grace upon grace given to us by God; instead, it will bear unworthy fruit. To be simply Christian is to embrace the truth that "apart from me you can do nothing."

"If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and remain in his love. I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15:10–11, WEB) Apart from Him, we cannot keep His commandments. Traditional congregations have often obscured Divine love with doctrines of division, including that of eternal conscious torment. It seems reasonable to say that to live in continual worry is, in practice, to confess that we are not remaining in His love. Worry is not joy. Even a little worry displaces the fullness of joy in Him.

Christ commands us not to worry. Scripture teaches us not to worry about what we will eat or wear. God clothes the lilies of the field more splendidly than Solomon on his best day. The crows do not worry about food. The Father cares for us far more than He cares for lilies and birds. We have no reason to worry—yet we do. Traditions complicate our walk with Christ, burdening us with rules and authoritarian expectations.

"But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him. This is how we know that we are in him: he who says he remains in him ought himself also to walk just like he walked." (1 John 2:5–6, WEB) Jesus did not walk in fear of what governments or religious traditionalists might do to Him. He did not walk in anxiety about His daily needs. He walked in Truth, preaching His Gospel of salvation. To be simply Christian is to walk in love, even toward those who hate us. Traditions that diminish impartial grace become unnecessary obstacles in that walk.

"Now, little children, remain in him, that when he appears, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him." (1 John 2:28–29, WEB) Traditions and doctrines often slice "righteousness" into so many pieces that the word loses meaning. Christ-like righteousness is simple: loving as He loved, walking as He walked. A righteous life is a life lived in Him. The fruit of our testimony about Him, through Him, and in Him will keep us from standing naked and ashamed before Him.

“Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure. Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whoever remains in him doesn’t sin. Whoever sins hasn’t seen him, neither knows him.” (1 John 3:3–6, WEB) Being simply Christian is a matter of abiding in Christ and trusting His power to purify us. Traditions that create divisions—denominations being the visible proof—work against Christ-like unity and therefore against His will. Traditionalists elevate their doctrines to supremacy and then bend the Word of God to fit their theology.

“Watch yourselves, that we don’t lose the things which we have accomplished, but that we receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and doesn’t remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn’t have God. He who remains in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you, and doesn’t bring this teaching, don’t receive him into your house, and don’t welcome him, for he who welcomes him participates in his evil works.” (2 John 1:8–11, WEB) Being simply Christian requires only dedication to Him—to serve Him and to remain in His teaching. He tells us to love orphans and widows, to care for them. One who persists in sin will neither see God nor know Him. When we abide in Christ, our gifts are many: spiritual fruitfulness, answered prayer, abundant peace, new life, and a deeper dedication to Him than to our fears.

“There is nothing to fear” is not just a slogan; it is a spiritual reality for those who abide in Christ. Our lives reflect the Truth, and we honor our Savior and Lord. Traditions demand adherence to rules established and enforced by men. Jesus teaches: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer. Every branch in me that doesn’t bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already pruned clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can’t bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man doesn’t remain in me, he is thrown out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.” (John 15:1–7, WEB) Jesus speaks to us as the true Vine in whom we find our life. Christ Jesus sustains us. We are already in the Vine, and the expectation is to bear His fruit. Abiding in Him, feeding from the Vine, is a choice. We choose to abide in Him. As we do, we learn to enjoy life in Him as He lives in us. By His grace, He leads us to bear much fruit. The Father tends the Vine. His purpose is to make it fruitful. He prunes unproductive branches and grafts in new ones. He constantly watches over His Vine and, in doing so, makes it stronger and more fruitful.

Consider the disciples. The young men Christ chose were green and immature. Yet He called them and grafted them in. Which of the Twelve was cut away and lost forever? Judas Iscariot is often cited by traditionalists as an example of a branch cut off and destined for eternal conscious torment. Peter, who denied Christ three times, was restored. Paul, once “chief of sinners,” was grafted in after persecuting the church.

The doctrine of eternal conscious torment claims that Judas’ branch was cut away, left to wither, and is now eternally burning. Paul’s branch, however, was grafted in. Traditionalists often presume to take up the Vintner’s shears, deciding for themselves which branches God must cut away, and which He may graft in. Their doctrines overstep Divine sovereignty and lean heavily on the traditions of men. Some among us began well in belief but have walked away. They have taken on, for a time, a spirit opposed to Christ. Traditionalists insist such branches are destined for unending fire. Yet even a cut-away branch remains, in origin, a part of the Vine’s creation. The Vintner is still sovereign over what happens to it. Others live a “church life,” drawing their sense of worth from position and recognition.



They may become hardened, legalistic, and bound to ritual rather than to Christ. Their branch withers, and if not revived, it too is cut away.

“If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it will be done for you.” (John 15:7, WEB) To be simply Christian is to rest in the assurance that every true need—and even our deepest desires—will be met as we abide in Christ and His words abide in us. He is the Word. His words are His doctrines, His Gospel, the full counsel of God. His words shape our daily lives. We love because He first loved us. We treat others with dignity and respect because His words live in us. We advance the Truth of His Gospel because His words are rooted in our hearts. This assurance of answered prayer is never taken away, but it can be hidden. Traditions act like a basket placed over a lit lamp. When we keep His commandments and hold to His teaching, we can rest in His keeping. Rites, rituals, creeds, and man-made commitments often obscure the Light.

“Whatever you will ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, keep my commandments. I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, that he may be with you forever,—the Spirit of truth, whom the world can’t receive; for it doesn’t see him, neither knows him. You know him, for he lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.” (John 14:13–18, WEB) If we are truly simply Christian, then our prayers will increasingly reflect His will: that the Spirit guide us, that Christ be glorified, that love be perfected in us. We will not be asking for the trinkets of this world. We will be asking for holiness, integrity, humility, and love.

Albert Barnes comments that our prayers are heard when we keep the commandments of Christ and live by faith in Him. Were we perfect in all things, he suggests, we would never make an improper petition.

“If I cherished sin in my heart, the Lord wouldn’t have listened.” (Psalm 66:18, WEB) Selfish motives in prayer fall on deaf ears. Prideful prayers are not heard. But prayers rising from the love of God and for the good of others are listened to and answered. Being simply Christian means allowing the Holy Spirit within us to shape our desires and our requests.

“I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, WEB) Jesus told His disciples they would scatter and leave Him alone. They did. John later returned and stood near the cross. Even then, Jesus was not truly alone; the Father was with Him. In this single verse we find comfort, courage, and peace. Christ has overcome the world. He carries our burdens—those of believers and unbelievers alike. Being simply Christian is acknowledging that we will suffer in this world, but that there is nothing we cannot face as we abide in Him.

Traditions often preach that we must “do” something to satisfy their demands in order to be truly accepted. But Christ carried the true burden. The rites and rituals of tradition add weight to the shoulders He has already promised to lift.

“He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for their sakes died and rose again. Therefore we know no one after the flesh from now on. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them

their trespasses, and having committed to us the word of reconciliation. We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:15–21, WEB) It is vanity to claim, “I am in Christ,” while living according to the flesh. A Christian’s heart is changed. The old man dies; the new man lives. To be simply Christian is to live as one reconciled and to carry the ministry of reconciliation to others.

“If anyone among you thinks himself to be religious while he doesn’t bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this man’s religion is worthless. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:26–27, WEB) This is what God expects from those who believe. There should be no neglected orphan among us, no forgotten widow. And we should guard our hearts from the world’s stains. Traditions that divide and diminish others are stains.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta offers a powerful example of someone devoted to caring for orphans and the poorest of the poor. Yet traditionalist voices have questioned whether her faith “qualified” her for heaven. Some claim her devotion, while extraordinary, was still essentially worthless unless it fit their doctrinal grid. Such judgments reveal the depth to which traditions can override the plain teaching of Scripture about pure and undefiled religion.

Paul writes: “I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord... that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own... but that which is through faith in Christ...” (Philippians 3:8–21, WEB) Knowing Christ is a gift from Christ. Paul calls us to press on toward that high calling. There is but one rule: to strive to walk as Christ walked. His life, suffering, death, and resurrection are the pattern. We do not reach perfection in this life, but by striving, abiding, and trusting, we live as simply Christian.

“But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been revealed... even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:21–26, WEB) My friends, abiding in Christ is the honor our Lord deserves. Worship and praise on Sunday are good but not sufficient by themselves. Teaching a Sunday school class or preaching a sermon is good but not enough. Giving tithes and offerings is good but not enough. Like Mother Teresa’s bushel of good works, our works, apart from abiding in Christ, cannot be the ground of our hope.

“As he was going out into the way, one ran to him, knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. You know the commandments...’ He said to him, ‘Teacher, I have observed all these things from my youth.’ Jesus looking at him loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me, taking up the cross.’ But his face fell at that saying, and he went away sorrowful, for he was one who had great possessions...” (Mark 10:17–31, WEB) To be simply Christian is to abide in Christ and to give Him all. The rich young ruler would not. He loved his possessions more than Christ. Traditions are often guarded in the same way—held tightly, protected fiercely. Traditional doctrines teach that it is “too late” for people like the rich young ruler, that they are bound for eternal conscious torment. Yet Christ reminds us that “with God all things are possible.”

In 2 Kings 21–23, we read of Josiah’s reforms in Judah. Though it was “too late” to avert judgment on

the nation, Josiah still did what was right. He tore down idols, cleansed the temple, and restored true worship. His actions mattered, even if the national outcome was set. Traditions can be like the idols Josiah destroyed. Traditionalists speak against idolatry while clinging to their own: doctrines, rites, rituals, and systems that they will not surrender. Their eternal fires still burn—sometimes more fiercely in pulpits than in any pagan grove.

### Conclusion

To be simply Christian is to set aside every confidence in tradition, denomination, or personal achievement and to rest wholly in Christ. It is to abide in Him as the true Vine, to walk as He walked, to love as He loved, and to trust that His impartial grace is greater than all our divisions. Traditions may have their place, but they must never take the place of Jesus. When we let go of what is merely man-made and cling to Him alone, we discover the peace, freedom, and unity that have always been ours in Him. That is the life of being simply Christian.

## **Chapter 6: *Impartial Grace Is Simply Christian***

Scriptural history in God's Holy Word describes an early evangelical mission in which Christ sends twelve disciples into Israel to preach. In this mission, Jesus specifically excludes Gentiles—the message is exclusively for “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He places strict limits on where they may go, how they must behave, and even instructs them to “shake the dust off their feet” as a testimony against any household that refuses to receive them. He warns them of persecution, instructs them to depend wholly on the Holy Spirit when confronting authorities, and He urges them to persist. Jesus tells them: “Therefore don't be afraid of them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed... What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light... Don't be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Aren't two sparrows sold for an assarion coin? Not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will... You are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who confesses me before men, him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:26–33, WEB)

Taken by itself, this passage has led many people into fear. It seems, on the surface, to say that any moment of weakness—a single denial of Christ—could place a soul beyond redemption. But is that what Jesus means? Or is something deeper being shown?

### **A Modern Example of Fear and Denial**

In 2015, a mass shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, gave rise to testimony that the murderer asked if any students were Christians, and shot those who said “yes.” Some stood and were killed. Others, also believers, remained silent to preserve their lives. Did their silence constitute “denying Christ before men?” And if so, does Jesus' statement mean they are now denied before the Father forever? Traditionalists answer “yes.” But the Gospel reveals a God whose mercy is far larger than our fears. Jesus' words about confession and denial speak to the moment, not to an eternal, irreconcilable fate. A temporary denial is a sin—but not an unforgivable one. If it were, then we must condemn the two greatest leaders of the early Church: Peter and Paul.

### **Peter's Denial and Christ's Mercy**

Jesus foretold Peter's denial: “The rooster will by no means crow today until you deny that you know me three times.” (Luke 22:34) Peter's denials were not minor lapses. They were public, repeated rejections of his Lord—after walking with Jesus for years, after witnessing miracles, after declaring loyalty. Yet Jesus restored him, forgave him, and entrusted him with feeding His sheep. Peter's denial did not define his fate. Grace did.

### **Paul's Hatred and Christ's Mercy**

Paul persecuted Christians violently. He arrested them, abused them, and supported their executions. He denied Christ in word and action—and yet Jesus appeared to him, saved him, forgave him, and made him an Apostle. If Paul—“chief among sinners”—is forgiven, then none are beyond mercy.

### **Judas Iscariot and the Mystery of Mercy**

Judas is the most misunderstood figure in Scripture. Many assume he is eternally damned, but several details deserve sober reflection. Satan entered Judas only at the end. Scripture notes that for the first three years of ministry, Judas walked with Christ as a trusted disciple and treasurer. It was at the Passover that “Satan entered into him” (Luke 22:3). Even Job was afflicted by Satan with God's permission. God remains sovereign over every event. Secondly, Jesus shared the Lord's Supper with Judas. Judas was present at the table when Jesus instituted the New Covenant. Jesus handed him bread

and wine—symbols of His body and blood “poured out for many for the remission of sins.” There is no biblical reason to believe Judas was excluded. Third, Jesus calls Judas “Friend.” When Judas arrives in the garden to betray Him, Jesus says: “Friend, why are you here?” (Matthew 26:50) This is not sarcasm nor condemnation. It is mercy. Lastly, Judas repented. Scripture says Judas “felt remorse,” returned the silver, confessed, “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,” and could not bear the weight of his guilt. His suicide was a tragic act of despair, not defiance. Though tradition condemns him, the Gospel never states that Judas is eternally lost. The blood of Christ atones for the sin of the world. Judas is not exempt from “the world.”

### **Denial Is Sin, Not Damnation**

Every believer denies Christ in many ways: in thoughts, in words, in our failures to love, in our hypocritical moments, in our silence, in our pride. To deny Him is sin—but He died for sin. To fail Him is tragic—but He restores the fallen. If Christ only accepted perfect disciples, then none would stand beside Him. But His mercy is impartial. His grace is relentless.

### **Impartial Grace: The Heart of the Gospel**

Paul writes: “For God has shut up all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” (Romans 11:32) All are shut up under sin. All will receive mercy. This is the Gospel. This is impartial grace. This is hope. Every denial, every failure, every betrayal—whether by Peter, Paul, Judas, or any one of us—falls under the same blood, shed for the sin of the world.

### **Conclusion**

Impartial grace is the good news that Christ’s mercy is not conditioned on perfect obedience, flawless courage, or unwavering confession. It is the good news that no denial is so great, no sin so heavy, and no failure so deep that His reconciling love cannot reach it. His mission is restoration, not ruin. His aim is reconciliation, not retribution. His grace is truly impartial—embracing the Peters, the Pauls, the Judases, and every trembling heart that has ever faltered.

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