

8 DISCIPLINE AND HOLINESS IN THE CHURCH

6-Jan-14 26-May-15 27-May-15 28-May-15 29-May-15 30-May-15, 2-jun-15, 4-jun-15, 24-Jun-15, 25-Jun-15, 1-Jul-15, 2-Jul-15, 3-Jul-15, 4-Jul-15, 6-Jul-15, 13-Jul-15, 15-Jul-15

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Challenge: Biblical discipline as it was practiced in the Old Testament and in the early church is not practiced today for obvious reasons, it was terrible. Evidently it needs updating. This thesis will be very strong and revealing but difficult to be understood for those who are accustomed to just the milk of the Word Hebrews 5:11-6:3. We will analyze the Scriptures on discipline in the Old and New Testaments and will try to **translate, adapt or amend** it to our times and situation. We will also find out who really executes the discipline and, finally, the way we believers can avoid it.

Definitely, under the Law of Moses, the Prophets of the Old Testament and even the Apostles in the New Testament Church, when a believer committed sin, he was clearly and **rigorously** disciplined. My personal opinion is that the discipline was generally disproportionate to the offense, but as it is in the Scriptures, we will consider it with respect but candidly. My aim in this thesis is to examine the disciplines used in both Testaments and think how we can **achieve the same results of holiness** in the Church today with a methodology more in line with grace and doable in our culture. These issues are not usually spoken from our pulpits because they are not popular even though the Holy Scriptures are very clear and **discipline, in one way or another, is necessary in the Church** as in any family.

INTRODUCTION

The denomination I belong to, the Reformed Church in America, has a very clearly defined constitution in the "Book of Church Order" where the discipline of members, ministers and professors of theology is regulated based on **Matthew 18:15-17**. It is one of the best guides for a Protestant Church and is continuously revised.

Let's examine the differences between Moses and Jesus regarding discipline:

Matthew 18:15-17 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **15** "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, **you have won your brother**. **16** But if he **does not listen to you**, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses **every fact may be confirmed**. **17** 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**.

Jesus gives the believer who sins **three opportunities to repent and receive forgiveness**. First, since under grace all the chosen people are priests and have the grace and authority given by the Holy Spirit to forgive sins ^{John 20:22-23}, the believer can give a pardon if the sinner **repents** and **confesses** his guilt, **and no one else needs to know what his sin was**. Second, if he does not repent, he should be interviewed again with one or two witnesses. If he repents, he has to be **forgiven and only those two witnesses will know what happened**. Third, if he does not repent before the witnesses, his sin will be made **public** and if he then repents he **still will be forgiven** but if he does not repent the third time, he will be excommunicated. It is during this period that the offender should be motivated to want to repent encouraged by spiritual people who are friends and love Him including the leaders of the church.

This type of discipline seldom happens in our churches, because we do not practice confession to one another and emphasize only private confession to God. On top of this our individualism makes us think that our problems are our own business. We wrongly believe that confession is a Roman Catholic practice but **confession and forgiveness** is a commandment for all believers and should be considered even as part of the sacrament of communion ^{1 Corinthians 11:28}, and part of the prayer for the sick.

James 5:14-16 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **14** Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; **15** and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, **and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him**. **16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed**. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

1 John 1:8-2:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **8** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; **2** and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

This thesis is a study of the discipline and punishments **practiced in the Old and New Testaments** and to find out how to practice spiritual grace **while** applying the letter of **Matthew 18:15-17**, considering **2 Corinthians 3:4-6**, which states that *"the letter kills but the Spirit gives life"*.

We should be able to discern when a difficulty in life **is a divine discipline or it is not**, but very few have this discernment. I cannot tell when the misfortunes that happen to us are a **test, discipline, punishment** or simply a virus, infection or accident. There are some believers who like to judge others when they have a car accident, become ill or experience a misfortune and ask: what wrong must he have done for these things to happen to him? Job's friends judged him believing that God was punishing him for his sins Job 8:4-6. **They were all wrong** Job 42:7-9. Job was not being punished for misbehavior, God and Satan were testing him. Job himself was confused. Neither Job nor his friends knew what was happening in the **spiritual realm**. It was a contest between God and Satan, not a divine punishment.

A. DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH TODAY

1. The examples in Scripture about discipline in the Church are strong and discipline is sometimes **too severe, frightening** and even **scandalizing**. I know that today there are very few groups that practice physical punishments to discipline their members, only sects and some religions would. When I was young, in our Church we were disciplined if we smoked, or went to a dance, the movies or if we were angry with a person in the Church. Once I was disciplined for "not loving a deacon" who had no patience with teenagers as we do today. The discipline I received was no longer being greeted with the "peace of the Lord" that

was our standard Christian greeting instead “good morning” that unbelievers used. Also, for a while I could not partake of the sacrament of communion, and if we were in the choir, were Sunday School teachers or some other activity we were suspended. **We were not beaten**, but it was painful nonetheless. I did eventually reconcile with the Deacon with tears over communion and they lifted the discipline from me, which means that the discipline of the Church and my mother’s advice actually **worked**. Had it not been for the discipline, I might have been angry with that deacon forever. In my case, **thank God for the discipline**. Actually it was during this experience in my teenage years that I learned to love my enemies and forgive them in order to be honest in my reconciliation. Thanks to our pastor and my mentor (my mother). **Blessed be the discipline!**

2. Today in most churches we only discipline pastors and leaders suspending them from their duties or simply removing them, but only for **moral** sins. We generally do not discipline believers as it was done in our small churches when I was a young man. Today with our large congregations it would be difficult to monitor each one to see if someone goes to the movies or smokes. Also nowadays we no longer consider such things as going to the movies as serious because we all have television and the Internet at home, which could be worse than the movies. Also, cholesterol in buttery foods and fat-laden BBQ does more damage to the liver and arteries than smoking. There are so many churches around now, that if we disciplined a member he would just move to another church and that’s it. So **I'm not writing this so that we begin punishing our believers**, but that we get informed how people of God were disciplined in Biblical times and think what methodology we should use today to achieve **holiness in the Church in this modern church time and culture**. Generally nowadays we do not try to solve things with punishment, but with counseling. Our current churches have pastors with psychology degrees who are responsible for advising those who have problems. They are treated as patients instead of sinners. We have groups for Alcoholics Anonymous to help those who are victims of alcohol etc., as well as groups to help people with bad tempers, etc. Nor do we consider today some sins that were considered sins in the past. Now alcoholism, being bipolar, compulsive, depressive, autism, jealousy, etc., are considered diseases. But since the subject of discipline is so prominent in Scripture we must at least search out and learn why we don’t use the same discipline today, though it is clear in the Scriptures, what **we did not know existed in the Scriptures about discipline, who**

executed that discipline, how to help problematic people to change without punishments using the **provisions of grace**, among them the fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*, and how to use other methods to achieve the same or better results to maintain holiness in the Church.

3. Perhaps the most important aspect to learn is how to replace the **discipline of the Law of Moses** with the discipline of the **Grace of Jesus Christ** John 1:17 in order to obtain **better results** than those obtained with the **punishments**. Jesus was revolutionary in this matter. The Law of Moses commanded stoning adulteresses. But Jesus “stoned” the adulteress with **forgiveness, freeing** her from the deadly punishment, and I think giving her also **the desire not to do it again** Philippians 2:13, shaming those who came with the methodology of the stones in their hands to kill her. Killing her was Moses’ solution Hebrew 10:28, but not Jesus Christ the Son of God’s solution John 8:3-11. You will decide what to do with this teaching. I put it in my list of thesis because it contains elements that **we never heard before nor meditated upon**, and to refine our knowledge to ensure that though people in past centuries were so severely punished, in the present day we need to obtain transformation with a different methodology, **but still transformation**. Considering that under grace it is God who provides **both the will and the ability to do** his will Philippians 2:13. As in all things under grace and in Christ, it is a matter of **wanting** to be holy and believing we can accomplish this through our **union with Christ**, that is to believe that **“we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength”** Philippians 4:13; and not be motivated by threats and punishments.

4. Our faith and the ministry of the Holy Spirit will help us to **want** to be good and **to accomplish it, to want to be obedient** and to actually **become obedient**. We pastors must act **as ministers of the new covenant** of grace and not the **Old Covenant** of the Letter, motivating people to believe they **can** achieve, **through a relationship with Jesus**, wanting to be holy and being able to do the will of God Philippians 2:13 using the resources of the Spirit of Christ to neutralize the desires of the flesh Romans 8:13. That is, **learn to walk in the Spirit** obeying our conscience where the Spirit dwells Galatians 5:25. We pastors are use to ministering **letter**; we give **Bible studies** to people to teach them what is right and what is wrong. We should rather find a way to teach them the Scriptures, to walk in the Spirit of Christ, with our example, and how to impart the Holy Spirit through **prayer and the laying on of**

hands, ministering not only Bible studies but also **Spirit and life** 2 Corinthians 3:4-6,18.
Meditate on the following Scriptures:

Romans 8:5-17 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but **those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.** **6** For the mind set on the flesh is death, but **the mind set on the Spirit is life** and peace, **7** because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, **8** and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **9** However, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. **10** If **Christ is in you**, though the body is dead because of sin, yet **the spirit is alive** because of righteousness. **11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. **12** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— **13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** **14** For **all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.** **15** For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" **16** **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,** **17** and if children, **heirs also**, heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

2 Corinthians 3:18 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **18** But we all, with **unveiled** face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** just as **from the Lord, the Spirit.**

Colossians 3:1-3 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **3** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. **3** For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

Galatians 5:25 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **25** If we **live** by the Spirit, let us also **walk** by the Spirit.

5. What I mean is that teachers have to focus on life transformation through the Spirit:

Colossians 1:28-29 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **28** We proclaim Him, **admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.**
29 For **this purpose** also I labor, **striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.**

Let's see what our task should be as ministers **not** of the letter **but of the Spirit**. Not ministers of punishment but ministers of capacity, via the Spirit, to obey God.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6 **4** And such confidence we have through Christ toward God; **5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves** to think anything as of ourselves, but **our sufficiency is from God**, **6** who also **made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of letter but of the spirit**; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life**.

The ministers of the letter, minister Bible Studies that generally condemns or kills, because sometimes the person giving the study on patience is himself impatient... the person who teaches how to be healed, is sick... the person who teaches not to be anxious is grieving. If we do not succeed in living what we teach we are imparting condemnation because they will not see an example of what the letter says they should. They need more than letter; they need the Holy Spirit to impart what we are teaching; and in order to teach it, we need to have the **experience ourselves**. The New Covenant ministry gives life transformation and helps people experience righteous living. Ministers of the New Covenant minister not just the letter which condemns people but the Spirit who forgives and gives life experience of what the letter says, the reality of it, the life of what it teaches, and the capacity to get it. We must first understand it ourselves, know how it works, live it and then teach with our example of how God's grace operates in our lives. We first minister with our example, then with our words, and then by imparting it by prayer motivating people to believe the promises of God; we have to be able to say as Paul said: "**Be imitators of me as I am of Christ**" 1 Corinthians 11:1 and also: "*The things you have **learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you***" Philippians 4:9. We must trust the Holy Spirit to produce transformation of life through the fruit of the Spirit from within the person 2 Corinthians 3:18, not threatening them with punishment if they do not get it, but helping with our example of holy living to help their faith. They should think **"if he can, why not me?"** Give them

the promises of God Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jeremiah 31:33, providing time for **fasting, prayer and laying on of hands to impart the life of the Holy Spirit** Acts 8:18 13:3, 19:6, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Romans 1:11; this is the **new way** under the New Covenant to achieve holiness with tools that **promise** and **produce** life instead of condemnation 2 Corinthians 3:6.

2 Peter 1:4 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **4** For by these **He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises**, so that **by them** you may become **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

6. This is the promise of the Father:

Ezekiel 36:26-27 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **26** Moreover, **I will give you a new heart** and **put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes**, and **you will be careful to observe My ordinances**.

Note the words **"I will cause you to walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them"**. Who is going to **"cause us to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments and do them"**? **God himself!** This is the promise of the Father; this is Grace, **"I will cause you to walk in my statutes and precepts"**.

Jeremiah 31:33 "But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord: **I will put my law within them**, and **write it in their hearts** (Conscience); and **I will be their God**, and they shall be **my people**."

Note this promise: **"I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts"** Who can do that? **Only God himself!** These are the promises we must believe and not hesitate to practice them. As we learn to walk and ride a bike, falling over until we learn and fall no more, so we must use the promises of God and never cease to try to live them until we learn to live those promises and they become the norm. New Covenant ministers are ministers of the Spirit and not just the letter; we must produce New Covenant believers and not legalistic and judgmental ones, knowing that our competency comes from God. The Law of Moses **discovers, reveals and condemns sin** Romans 7:5, 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, Grace **cures sin, forgives it and helps us overcome it** Ephesians 1:7, and transforms the lives of sinners who

believe 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18. Paul defines a believer of the New Covenant, as follows:

2 Corinthians 3:3-4, 18 **3 You are a letter of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.** 4 And such trust have we through Christ to God ... 18 But we all, with **open face** beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are changed from glory to glory in the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

We usually give a Bible to those we want to win for Christ. But Paul had no Bibles to give away, because there were no printing presses and the New Testament had not been written yet. Instead he "gave" the world **persons transformed by the Holy Spirit**. Paul's spiritual children were "**letters of Christ**". They were living Bibles walking through the neighborhoods of the Roman Empire, serving the Lord in the newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter Romans 7:6. These believers were living epistles of Christ written by the Apostles, "**not with ink**" like books, or tablets of stone, or scrolls, but "**written with the Spirit of God, not on tablets of stone or paper, but fleshy tables of the heart**" as prophesied by Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26-27.

7. The work of the Minister of the New Covenant is not to threaten people with punishment to accomplish holiness, as did Moses in his Law, but to motivate people to believe that Christ promised to give us both, the **desire** to obey, and the ability to actually obey. This is the key, to receive from God himself the willingness to change our bad habits for good habits, and the wanting to be saints, the ability to live as God pleases Philippians 2:13 by unveiling the resources that grace brings to us in the fruit of the Spirit: "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*" Galatians 5:22-25. Encouraging them **to trust** the promises of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus did is very interesting: He did not give them a Bible verse to learn it by heart but "**breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit**" John 20:22 The day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as "*a rushing wind and it filled the whole house*" Acts 2:2; later on those Apostles laid hands on people to impart the Holy Spirit Acts 8:14-17. I believe that in our churches we need more spiritual consistory sessions as this one:

Acts 13:1-3 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **13** Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** While **they were ministering**

to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

We mostly specialize in Bible Studies. Of course those poor first Christians did not have Bibles and the New Testament was not even written yet. They did not have CDs, nor DVDs, or manuals, no Sunday School materials, or commentaries or Internet... they just had the Holy Spirit. Jesus had say to them "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... the Holy Spirit will teach you all things and guide you into all truth" John 14:18, 26, but to us I do not remember how or when he said, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will leave you a book so you can give Bible Studies". I believe that we should exercise our faith in the always present Holy Spirit for "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."*" Romans 1:17 and seriously use the resources we have in the Christ.

Teachers and pastors today are just as responsible for the holiness of the Church as were the leaders in the early days; only the methods for accomplishing it should be different because under the New Covenant they are different. What a mixture of Law and grace we have in our churches! Under the Old Covenant there was an **obligation to obey dictated from outside**, but now we have the **desire born within us** that makes us willing, making everything much easier. The key is to have the willingness and the capacity **to do it!** Under the Law of Moses we were forced to change under **threats and punishments** and we could not do it so we were **always punished** Romans 7:14. Under grace, God puts His desires in our hearts and minds and suddenly **we realize that it is us** from within who desire and are willing to change. What God put in us is the Holy Spirit whose fruit is the character of Christ Galatians 5:22-25 and if we are guided by the Holy Spirit, we are not under the Law of Moses but under the Spirit of Christ Galatians 5:18. The Holy Spirit gives us both the will to obey as well as the ability to do it Philippians 2:13. **This is Grace.** God promised: "*I will cause you to walk in my statutes*" Ezekiel 36:27.

One morning my wife woke up with a terrible headache. I told one of my daughters, a teenager at the time: "Since mom feels so bad, could you please clean the breakfast table and wash the dishes?" She replied, "Now you've ruined it. I was going to do it by myself, but now that you told me to do it, I will not do it."

Actually, my daughter was wrong, but I learned a lesson: our nature refuses to take orders from outside, but when the order comes from inside of us, from our conscience, it is different. But after she said that, she did it anyway, but surely she felt that obeying her conscience was easier to do it than if the commandment came from outside of her. That is precisely what makes grace; it is not a compulsion from outside but a desire from inside, Jeremiah 31:33, Philippians 2:13.

8. Beloved, how difficult it is to understand or accept Grace! Every day I realize that I really did not yet fully understand it. Every day I discover a new benefit, a new way. Holiness under grace is not only to force ourselves not to sin, but to not even wanting to sin. If I want to sin but despite my desires I deny myself to do what I would like with sacrifice, that's laudable, **but it still is not grace**, it's me. Jesus said: The law says, *"Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery."* So if I covet to sin and force myself not to do it, I sinned anyhow. Grace gives us the will not to sin but to do God's will! Philippians 2:13. Under the Law of Moses, a man who is tempted when he sees a woman with a beautiful body and makes a great effort not to fall, he does not commit adultery, with that effort being enough under the law. But Grace goes further, causing us to **not want to covet sin**. Grace not only cures sin, but prevents it placing the wishes of God within us that then become our desires Jeremiah 31:33-34.

Our choice should be not to discipline believers with punishment, but use a methodology more according to Jesus Christ. Observe how Jesus "disciplined" Peter who denied Him John 21:15-19: He disciplined him by asking a simple question **three** times: ***"Do you love me?"*** That struck Peter more than being stoned! His love for Jesus made Peter what He was after that experience. And to the adulterous woman John 8:3-11 he disciplined her by writing something in the sand and saying: ***"I do not condemn you, go and sin no more"***. Today's culture is becoming more permissive, but we are not of the world 1 John 2:15-17, the culture of the world should not stand between the church and holiness. In other words, when we understand what it says and believe **Philippians 2:13**, we will be able to practice it as **Philippians 2:12** says, that is, seriously, and **it will work!** I want to be holy, not **because** I am very spiritual, but because God gives me the grace **to want** to be holy, our **ability comes from God** 2 Corinthians 3:4-5. I should never boast of wanting to be holy, because God gave me the love for Him that desires to be holy and I

think I can be holy because I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength, that is, I can by His grace Philippians 4:13. **He made me think** that I can abandon forever the paths of error. In Christ we are complete Colossians 2:10. So if there is room for boasting, **it is boasting in the Lord** 1 Corinthians 1:31. So the life of holiness is not only not sinning but not even wanting to sin. Otherwise it would be a restricted life, always struggling with Satan's temptations. We should teach believers in Christ how to find both the willingness and the action and thus enter into God's rest Hebrews 4:9-10.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **26** For consider **your calling**, brethren, that there were not many **wise according to the flesh**, not many **mighty**, not many **noble**; **27** but God has **chosen the foolish things of the world** to shame the wise, and God has chosen the **weak** things of the world to shame the things which are strong, **28** and the **base** things of the world and the **despised** God has chosen, the **things that are not**, so that He may nullify the things that are, **29** so that **no man may boast before God.** **30** But by **His doing you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us **wisdom** from God, and **righteousness** and **sanctification**, and **redemption**, **31** so that, just as it is written, **"Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."**

Ask yourself these questions: vs. 26 What does it mean "*consider, brothers, **His** calling*"? Was it we who called God to save us or was it God who called us because He chose us for salvation? Romans 8:29-30. vs. 27-28 Are we, "the foolish, the weak, vile, despised" who chose God or God who chose us? vs. 30 "*You are now in Christ Jesus*", was it we who bought Christ to us by our good works or was it He who bought us with His blood? Was it He who belongs to us or is it we that belong to **Him**? What do you understand when Paul says: "***You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption***"? Are we giving our sanctification to Christ or is He giving it to us? Do we have to strain to be "*wise, justified, sanctified and redeemed*" to be united with Christ or vice versa, because we are connected with Christ we receive God's *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*? vs. 31 If we can live a holy and pure life, to whom is the glory, God's or ours?

9. Actually this is the big difference between Law and Grace. The law from outside of us, from a book, demands holiness, but does not provide it. Neither does it

provide forgiveness. Always we had to pay with suffering, pests, diseases, losing battles, offering expensive animals as sacrifices, etc. according to Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Moses, the giver of the Law was not a Savior. Grace, given by Jesus has a Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord! John 1:17. Jesus freed us from the curse of the Law of Moses Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for it is written: Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Actually our pastoral ministry is to motivate every believer **to enter into a state** of grace Romans 5:2, the grace of Jesus Christ that He worked so hard to complete for every believer who comes under our ministry. We must be motivators of faith and convince believers that they will want and be able to do the will of God because both are included in the package of the grace of Jesus Christ, which also includes forgiveness in case we fail
1 John 2:1-3.

Under grace we are forgiven and received the ability to forgive others Matthew 6:12. The phrase "forgive us **as we** forgive" implies that we have the capacity to forgive. This is very important: Grace provides both the will and the ability to do God's will! The desire to be holy is born in us by the Holy Spirit and the ability to achieve it too. We should meditate and stress more on this subject because the Church is becoming very permissive, emphasizing cheap grace, as if grace were a license to sin instead the **gift to not sin** Romans 6:1-3, 6-7, 11. And if we turn to the Law of Moses to force people to live in holiness, we are on the wrong side of the solution. Only the grace of Jesus Christ gives us the will and the ability to do it and the forgiveness when we fail
1 John 1:8-2:2.

10. Another thing I want to accomplish is to be more humble and help you to be more humble, recognizing that though we presume to be the people of the Book, defend the inerrancy of Scripture, boast to say that the Bible is our rule of faith and practice and judge those who are more liberal, nonetheless we do not practice many things that are very clear in the Scriptures, because they do not agree with our current culture. This confuses some people, especially young people who are smarter than we were. Someone asked me: what are the verses of the Bible that are mandatory and which are optional? Because there are many commands in Scripture that we don't keep, such as women wearing a veil on her head 2 Corinthians 11:5-7, divorce Mark 10:6-12, and divorce for any reason Matthew 19:9, that women should not speak in the congregation 1 Timothy 2:11-15, that we should sell our possessions and give them to the poor Matthew 19:21, have things in common and end poverty among

believers Acts 2:44, 4:32. In Bible times they had slaves 1 Peter 2:18, Ephesians 6:5-9, women had to be in submission to their husbands 1 Peter 3:1-2,6, and shouldn't dress ostentatiously 1 Peter 3:3-5, etc. All these things are very clear and many others, but we say that these are not dogmatic commandments, but **cultural** issues. I think there is truth in that.

11. **But beware!** Our great-grandchildren will be born in a **culture that has universally accepted same sex marriage as normal** and for them it will also be a cultural thing. Some in today's culture are already talking about the right to marry several partners, etc. Then how far will we approve what is just considered cultural? In the Old Testament it was cultural to have many wives, Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines 1 Kings 11:3. Even in the New Testament there were believers who had more than one wife, only the pastors were required to have only one wife 1 Timothy 3:2. So the question is, where is the limit on approving what is cultural? This is why this question is also correct: which verses are optional and which are mandatory? The answer would be: if it is a cultural thing, it is optional and if is not cultural it is mandatory? But, the culture is changing rapidly for the worse. Should we continue to change our attitude toward the Scriptures over the years? Are we using the Scriptures correctly affirming that the Bible is our rule of faith and conduct? Is fundamentalism okay or wrong? The early Apostles and believers had no Bibles as we do today; the Holy Spirit guided them. Jesus did not say, "I will not leave you orphans, I will leave you with a book", but He said, "**I will come to you**" in spirit. How we need the **guidance** of Holy Spirit today! Don't say that by emphasizing the Spirit, I am putting down the Scriptures; just consider the number of citations of Scripture that I have used in my thesis! I look more like a fundamentalist. I am asking myself as there are many things clearly stated in the Scriptures that we have changed even in the last few years for cultural reasons. Could it be that unconsciously we are saying that the Sacred Scriptures are becoming out of fashion or are we willing to come back to the New Testament times example and return to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles of those days were, and not to a new Book? Though I believe that we should give more importance to the Holy Spirit, because this is what the Scriptures emphasize John 5:39-40, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 7:6, I would find it very awkward to pray: "Holy Spirit, reveal to us if gay marriage is right or not. Should we marry gays?" Did we pray in the past? "Lord reveal to us if it is right for us to marry divorced persons", "Reveal to us if women can be pastors" We didn't but it happened.

12. I have a passion to see a Church without spot or wrinkle, no gossip, no jealousy, no envy, no immorality, no poverty, etc. But how do you get to that? by legalism, rules, general synod decision, or by the Holy Spirit impelling us? In all councils and synods we pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit in our decisions, but some synods after that prayer for guidance accepted gay marriage. These are questions to think about. I have my personal opinion on the disciplinary punishment in the Scriptures: I believe that the punishment for sin was too harsh and disproportionate to the offense; but what is right? Killing 140,000 persons counting women and children as a punishment because David counted the people in the country? 2 Samuel 24:1-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

We, who profess to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, need first to meditate on the discipline written in the Scriptures, and accept it as written. But we have to also accept the challenge of the things written that our culture **can and cannot comply** with. Will we end up having no discipline in the Church because of the culture? I think we should use other disciplinary methodology to achieve what those in the Old Testament wanted to achieve with their harsh punishments for people to change their behavior and maintain the sanctity of the Church. Though it is clear that **the fear of punishment helped** to holiness, consider this case:

Acts 5:1-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, **2** and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. **3** But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? **4** While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." **5** And **as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.** **6** The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. **7** Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." **9** Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together **to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?** Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out *as well.*" **10** And **immediately she fell at his feet and breathed**

her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.**

13. I would not preach from the pulpit all of what I am saying in this thesis, but I want to share it with leaders to deepen our knowledge of how discipline was administered in the Old Testament and even in the early Church. Punishment as discipline may help but do not cure ^{Colossians 2:20-23}, and the disciplines even in the New Testament, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, are too strong for me today, and will be even stronger for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren as the culture of the world changes some times for better and sometimes for worse. No judge today sentences to death a person for a lie. Culture is changing sometimes for the better and sometimes for worse. It has changed a lot since the days of Abraham, also from the time of Jesus, also from medieval times and even from the time when I was born.

Some New Testament disciplines could not be applied today by the leaders of the Church, as was the punishment to Ananias and Sapphira for lying ^{Acts 5:1-11}, or the death penalty to the immoral member of the Corinthian church:

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** It is actually reported that **there is immorality among you**, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. **2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.** **3** For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, **have already judged him** who has so committed this, as though I were present. **4** In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, **5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh**, so that **his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

It seems that this punishment was popular in those days:

1 Timothy 1:19-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **19** keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. **20** Among these are **Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.**

If we would use this apostolic way of punishment, think of how many funerals we would have each month? Or perhaps that would be the solution for sin! But today the unsaved relatives of the dead would sue our churches, the pastors would go to jail and the churches would be closed. Surely God can implement those disciplines on His own without our intervention if he wants to. I think if he wants, He can do that to the Ananias and Sapphiras of today by making them drop dead in their homes, but not because a pastor decrees it. Perhaps these punishments occur and we are not aware that it is a divine discipline! But I prefer not to judge Matthew 7:1-5. That is why these subjects are not taught or preached, but it is worth studying them to discern the character of God, what He **likes** and **dislikes**.

14. One important thing we learned in these lessons is that even when God severely disciplines a believer who has sinned, if he is elected by God, a born again son of God through his faith in Jesus, even if he commits a sin punishable by physical death, he or she **does not lose his eternal salvation** 1 Corinthians 5:5. This is precisely because he is a Son of God Hebrews 12:8 and salvation **is not by works but by grace**, by election of God 1 Peter 1:1-2, Romans 8:28-31. If he was not a son he **would not be disciplined** but because he is a son, he will never lose his salvation 1 John 2, 1-2. The discipline is to motivate us to good behavior Hebrews 12:11. We discipline our children, but they never stop being our children John 8:35 *"And the servant abideth not in the house forever; a son abides forever."* The servant, if he disobeys his master will be put out of the house but the son, even if he misbehaves will not be put out of the house. The immoral son in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, according to vs. 5, did not lose his salvation although his sin deserved physical death according to Paul. Salvation cannot be lost for a bad work because it is not by works that we are saved, but by our election and faith in Christ. Actually, the discipline proves that he is a Son of God. This is one of the most important lessons of Biblical discipline. Discipline shows that God disciplines those He loves. The believer should not confess their sins just in order to keep his salvation because he can never lose it. We must confess our sins and turn from sin **to avoid** the discipline. Carefully read this important Scripture:

Hebrews 12:5-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, **do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,**  **Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;** **6** For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,  And He scourges every

son whom He receives.” **7** It is for discipline that you endure; God **deals with you as with sons**; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? **8** But if you are **without discipline**, of which all have become partakers, **then you are illegitimate children and not sons**. **9** Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? **10** For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* **for our good, so that we may share His holiness**. **11** All discipline for the moment seems **not to be joyful, but sorrowful**; yet to those who have been trained by it, **afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness**. **12** Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, **but rather be healed**.

As we see, the fact that God punishes us indicates that we are children. No one can punish a neighbor's son. Only the father can do it because he loves him. And the son will always be a son, though his father punished him.

B. DISCIPLINE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The Flood.

Genesis 6:5-7 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** Then the Lord saw that the **wickedness of man was great** on the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. **6** The Lord was **sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and **He was grieved in His heart**. **7** The Lord said, “**I will blot out man** whom I have created from the face of the land, **from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky**; for **I am sorry** that I have made them.”

The punishment in this verse was killing **everybody**, the whole race all but one family of eight! The word “*God was sorry, or repented of having created people*” seems odd, because as God is omniscient, He had to know in advance what to expect with humans and not be surprised by their behavior. It would seem that it is sometimes impossible to find human words to define the feelings and actions of God and writers use words as close as possible to what it really is to give an idea of how God feels. This is called “anthropomorphism”. However, we are dismayed at first glance for such a drastic measure: He **killed the entire human race**! But

also it is clear in the Scriptures that "God loves those He chastens or punishes" Hebrews 12:6 because later God **sent Christ himself to go and preach to them**, the same people God punished with death, the good news of the Gospel, which is the forgiveness of sins. Already in this early case these sinful people were disciplined with physical death, as Paul threatened to the immoral believer at Corinth. But later, God sent the Savior to preach salvation to them after they were dead. Who said that after death there is no more opportunity to hear the Gospel? Interesting! No? See the **next Scriptures**:

1 Peter 3:19-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **18** For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; **19** in which also **He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark,** in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water.

1 Peter 4:5-6 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **5** but they will give account to Him who is ready to **judge the living and the dead.** **6** For the **gospel** has for this purpose **been preached even to those who are dead**, that though they are **judged in the flesh** as men, they may **live in the spirit according to *the will of God.***

According to Paul God is Just, he did it because sin was in the world before the Law and "**when there is no law, sin is not imputed**" Romans 5:13. In Noah's time there was still no law in the world, therefore, their sins are not counted. Therefore, God gave these wicked people who died in the flood the opportunity to be forgiven and saved. **God is just!**

Let us consider these other horrendous disciplines in the Old Testament:

2. The massacre for the sin of worshiping the golden calf.

Exodus 32:27-28 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **27** He said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Every man *of you* put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth **from gate to gate in the**

camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.”

28 So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and **about three thousand men of the people fell that day.**

Surely there were more who died that day, because in those times women and children were not counted. Making a golden calf and worshipping it was sinful and the punishment Moses commanded was to **kill their loved ones!** Frightening! It is difficult for us to understand this, but one lesson is certain: God does not like spiritual adultery!

3. The punishment of the people of Israel after David censured them. This was also horrible and difficult to digest!

2 Samuel 24:1,15 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **1** “Now again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and **it incited David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah...’** **15** So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and **seventy thousand men** of the people from Dan to Beersheba **died.**”

Apparently “*the anger of the Lord*” prompted King David to number his people in order to chastise them, so when David did it “God” punished the people. For me, this was a punishment **too disproportionate** with the offense. Surely since it was a plague women and children were also killed, so that the number could be more than 140,000 people! All because God wanted to punish Israel 2 Samuel 24:1-4,15. What an enormous and horrible punishment! Maybe later in this thesis you will find an answer for this horrible disaster.

4. The disciplines for all Israel under the Law of Moses... repulsive!

Sometimes I wonder if it is worth reading these passages? I do not think it is wise to give nonbelievers the whole Bible with the Old Testament. I prefer to give only the New Testament. Once I gave a Bible to a neighbor and the next week he returned it saying, “How can you give me a book like this knowing that in my house we have children? I read through the story of one drunk named Lot who slept with his daughters and had children with them!” And he returned the Bible to

me shocked. Good thing he did not continue reading until reaching the readings I will quote now. The Law of Moses disciplines are **repulsive**. **Killing** all kinds of sinners and **cursing the whole nation**, their behavior was like **ISIS and the Taliban** is today which, in our culture, is unacceptable. Here are some of the disciplines or punishments under the Law of Moses:

The law commands killing those who do any work on the Sabbath, Exodus 31:14, Numbers 15:32-36.

The law commands killing those who touch the sacred mountain, Exodus 19:12-13, 21-24

The law commands killing animists who worship nature, Deuteronomy 17:2-7.

The law commands killing the thief and his family, Joshua 7:24-26.

The law commands killing the false prophet, Deuteronomy 13:5,

The law commands killing those who disobey the priest, Deuteronomy 17:12.

The law commands killing the disobedient son, Deuteronomy 21:18-21,

The law commands killing homosexuals, Leviticus 20:13,

The law commands killing the spiritualists and fortunetellers, Leviticus 20:27, etc.

The law does not forgive, but instead kills, 2 Corinthians 3:6.

The law is a ministry of death, 2 Corinthians 3:7 and condemnation, 2 Corinthians 3:9.

Based on the law Christ was killed, John 19:7.

5. In fact, these rules were common at the time. Even today fundamentalist Muslim people such as Al Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS, etc., frozen in time, **continue to kill for these sins** and kill those who are of other faiths. The bloodthirsty ISIS scandalizes us, but we have that same thing **very clearly detailed in our Bible**. **Israel in ancient times was like the fundamentalist Muslims today**. Even the Christian Church in the **Middle Ages killed the heretics, spiritualists, mediums and many more during the Inquisition**. At that time this was **normal and cultural**. They learned it from the Old Testament. The Christian Church later began

to change with the **Lutheran and Calvinistic** Reformation. Since that time until now there are **reforms** such as the abolition of slavery, which was accepted in the Old and New Testaments, more justice for women, children, the sick, old people, still trying not to discriminate either by race or nationality, or being fat or thin, male or female, etc., because the world aims towards greater justice. Even Judaism has been reformed and adapted culturally. Today it only retains circumcision and celebrations, but they do not sacrifice animals neither do they follow the Law of Moses to the letter; otherwise they would be just like ISIS.

6. But those of us, who have lived 80 or more years, have seen big changes not only from ancient times but also in our own generation. For example, when I was a young pastor we did not baptize divorced people unless they would abandon their present wife and go back to their first wife. Otherwise they had to separate and stay single until the first wife would die ^{1 Corinthians 7:10-11}. Now we even have pastors who are divorced and remarried. Even Pope Francis is softening on the divorce issue. In my youth women could not preach or teach or pray publicly ^{1 Timothy 2:11-12}, much less be a pastor. And all women had to wear a veil on their heads ^{1 Corinthians 11:5-10} to recognize that they were subject to men. Today women are ordained ministers and no longer use a veil as a sign of subjection to men. Women were not allowed to use lipstick, makeup, cut their hair, perming, wear jewelry, short sleeves or a short skirt ^{1 Timothy 2:9}. I remember in our Church and even the Catholic Church, we had veils and sleeves at the door for those who did not bring a veil from their homes or arrived with short sleeves. All of this was based on the Bible. Also in our church, women and men had to sit separately in different rows. Furthermore, in those days in the US and some countries of Africa, blacks and whites could not worship God together in the same room.

One must choose between two reasons for these changes: The Church is either becoming **too worldly** or God is **leading the world toward more justice** for women, divorcees, discrimination, etc. We oldies are pulling out our hair as we see the changes in the Churches today in terms of same-sex marriage, music, dressing, entertaining, gospel of prosperity, etc. The whole world is moving towards acceptance of such things and there is talk that there is more yet to come, that in the near future marriage would be accepted with more than one partner. The positive for us old folks is that we will no longer be in this world when that comes, but we grieve for our grandchildren and great grandchildren to be born in a

more liberal and corrupt world. What will they do? Will they adapt as we adapted to divorce, movies, television, etc., or continue fighting in vain against these novelties? Will the spirit of the antichrist force them to accept and enforce the new permissive laws? My beloved mother, poor thing, whenever there was just a change in fashion, shorter sleeves or skirts, or different hairstyles or wider necklines, she would say, "the coming of the Lord is near..." Poor Mom if she would be alive today...! But now I'm saying to myself **I think** it should not be long before the Lord returns ... So I join John the Theologian and say, "**Come, Lord Jesus**" Revelation 22:20.

C. DISCIPLINE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Treatment of immorality at the Corinthian church: As we consider this passage, keep in mind that this writer is not Moses but Paul, the Paladin of Grace! We are now in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **1** It is actually reported that there is **immorality among you**, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that **someone has his father's wife**. **2** You have **become arrogant and have not mourned instead**, so that the one who had done this deed would **be removed from your midst**. **3** For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. **4** In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, **5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh**, so that **his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**.

As a pastor with lots of experience in elder's meetings where the sins of members of the church were discussed, let me create a scenario that may help you to better understand this Bible passage. For sure it was not as simple and dry as it sounds. I am inventing this story, giving life and warmth to it, based on the fact that the pastors of the Church at Corinth obviously **did not take immediate action** on this very clear case of immorality. **Why didn't they?** It is very strange. Paul says, "You have become **arrogant** and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed **would be removed from your midst**." Why did the elders of his church not expel him? As a pastor, I tried to move to Corinth in my mind and become one of the elders of the Church and imagine why they did not take action until Paul intervened. It is

possible that the case was more complex than it seems. Perhaps it was not merely "just an affair" that these two young persons did, it was more than an affair. Paul does not explain all probably because he was not present to see with his own eyes, but only heard of it and it hurt him very much. Here's my invented answer:

This young man who "had his father's wife" was a young elegant and good believer. He was a member of the Church, faithful in all things and much loved by the congregation because he was very polite and helpful and very active in the church. His father was a wealthy old man but quite overwhelmed by old age. He had been widowed and then married this much younger woman, a beautiful girl of the age of his son. Her parents had forced her to marry him, as it was common, a young girl forced to marry an old but wealthy man. Although he was a good man, it was not nice for this girl so young and beautiful to be married to him. It is possible that this old but rich man also was a good member of the Church, one of the major donors and all his beautiful family, children and grandchildren were good and active members of the Church and therefore were very dear to the pastors and to all the congregation. They were an important family in the Church. As the young wife was the same age of the elegant son, he fell in love with her, and she fell in love with him, and as this was an important family in the Church, no one would make a fuss because they did not want to lose them as members, and the elders decided to look the other way. Perhaps they had wanted to take action but some of the younger elders said "poor girl, she was forced to marry this ugly old man; it is understandable that she fell in love with the young man. They would be a much better couple, and anyways the old man may die any moment and eventually the young couple will get married anyhow". It is also possible that the elders had talked to them and they sincerely tried to separate from each other, but it was difficult, because they were really in love with each other and lived in the same house, hoping that the Lord would soon take the old man home.

The Elders eventually justified it and stopped worrying until... **until Paul discovered it!** Paul became furious, with justice, and wrote to them with harsh words: "*you have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, that the one of you that has done this might be removed from your midst.*" Paul takes a drastic measures to "remove" the rotten apple ^{1 Corinthians 5:6} and says: "*I, for my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, as if present, I have already judged him who committed such action. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, **to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.***"

This is a death sentence, which in **our culture today could not be done in a church.**

What I stress here is that these young people must have been sincere believers who fell into temptation. I say this because in vs 15 they did not lose their salvation. Paul is clear: "*Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord*". The recommended discipline or punishment was the destruction of the physical body, because "the immoral man sins against his own body" 1 Corinthians 6:18. His death was to remove this bad example from the other believers, but his inner being, because he trusted Christ for salvation, was **safe**. Salvation is not by works but by Divine choice and faith in Jesus Christ. This boy had been chosen by God, had been born again and therefore is not lost. If one is truly born of God he never loses his salvation. He cannot become unborn again. "*The son remains in the house forever*" John 8:35, as did the prodigal son despite his sin. He did not stop being the beloved son of the Father. It is believed that at last this young couple, when they heard Paul's letter read publicly in the Church, decided to separate rather than being handed over to Satan and therefore the elders of the Church and Paul **decided to forgive them**, giving them just a rebuke, a lesser discipline 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

The issues here are: first the **seriousness of the sin**, then the **indolence of the Church** to correct, then the **severe discipline** and finally the fact that this young couple, despite their sin, being children of God **did not lose their salvation**. Because salvation is eternal and not dependent on our behavior but of having been chosen by God to believe in Jesus, because **nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus** Romans 8:33-35,38-39. But what also speaks to me very strong is the great **distress** of Paul when he gives this discipline 2 Corinthians 2:4. Obviously he loved these two young persons, as a parent is seriously sad when he has to apply discipline to his child and does it with a pain heart. I think no one has authority to discipline another if he does not love him dearly and hurts. If you love finding sin in another and have a great desire to discipline others, it's because you do not love that person, and if you do not love him, you're not a father, and if you're not a father, you have no right or authority to discipline him. If you're not sure you love the person who falls and that he loves you too, you cannot discipline him or her, because you will do more damage than help. Another lesson is that if one repents and leaves the state of sin, he is **freed from the discipline** or

punishment ^{1 Corinthians 11:31-32}, but his eternal salvation is **never in danger**, because God is faithful ^{2 Timothy 2:13}.

2. Paul disciplined in the same way two other arrogant liars that we know: Hymenaeus and Alexander ^{1 Timothy 1:20} who taught heresies. The same thing must have happened to Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit and Peter ^{Acts 5:3-5,9-10}. Again, surely they both had trusted Christ for their salvation and were faithful to the Lord, but gave in to temptation. They were believers who built wood, hay and stubble instead of gold, silver and precious stones ^{1 Corinthians 3:11-15}, but because they were children of God they did not lose their salvation ^{1 Corinthians 3:15}. Never forget that when we believe we received not a perishable life, but Eternal Life. If we are elected from before the creation of the world, nothing can separate us from the love of God ^{Romans 8:33-39}, because our salvation is by election not by our works ^{Romans 8:29-31}. It is one thing to fall **in the ship** and another thing is to fall **from the ship**.

3. Paul himself was disciplined by the Lord because he had a tendency to exalt himself and become arrogant ^{2 Corinthians 12:1-6}. The discipline was also very severe, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan that buffeted him constantly... ^{2 Corinthians 12:1,7-9}. But Paul did not lose his salvation or his ministry by this tendency to arrogance.

4. Peter was also disciplined: Peter, arrogantly boasted that he would never abandon Jesus and would give his life for Him, but the Lord allowed Satan to shake him, and deny His master, just to humble him ^{Matthew 26:33-35, Luke 22:31}. Peter did not lose his salvation or his ministry for denying the Lord. *"For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable"* ^{Romans 11:29}.

5. Taking communion in an unworthy manner: There is also discipline for those who take the sacrament of communion in an unworthy manner; also the punishment is **physical** *"weakness, illness and premature death"*.

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **29** For he who eats and drinks, **eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.** **30** For this reason many among you are **weak and sick, and a number sleep.** **31** But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that **we will not be condemned along with the world.**

Paul advises them to **settle their accounts with their consciences**, with their peers and with God before approaching the Lord's table or they could be punished in that way with "*weakness, illness and premature death*". But he says that if we are disciplined or punished by the Lord, it is because **we are saved** and "**we will not be condemned with the world**" vs. 32. Even if *we do not examine ourselves or desist from our mistake* we will still **not lose our salvation** but will be disciplined or punished by the Lord in this life with illness and even death. **Repentance, confession and forgiveness** are not to recover our salvation but to avoid the discipline. Why? Because salvation is by grace, by having been chosen in Christ Ephesians 1:4 and not by good works or by taking the sacrament in a worthy manner. Nothing can cancel what God decided before all ages 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4, Titus 1:2, etc. and Christ accomplished on the cross Ephesians 3:11, Hebrews 9:12. Salvation is not lost because the call of God and His grace are irrevocable Romans 11:29, but **discipline can be severe** 1 Corinthians 11:31-32. **We can avoid discipline if, before taking communion, we examine our conscience and fix what needs to be fixed in our life.**

None of these disciplined people lost either their salvation or their ministry, but sometimes suffered **severe** disciplines. I hope you understand then that if one really has been chosen by God to salvation Acts 13:48, he is born again and his name is written in the book of life of the elect. **We never lose our salvation, because the call of God is without repentance** Romans 8:28-39. God will never regret having saved us Romans 11:29.

Now let's see another interesting truth. Do you know **where the discipline comes from?** I believe we should know and knowing will help us to see these things in a different way.

D. GOD USES SATAN TO DISCIPLINE HIS PEOPLE

Another interesting thing that caught my attention in the Scriptures is that **God uses Satan to discipline His children**; which makes Satan a kind of servant of God. James says:

James 1:13 New American Standard Bible (NASB) “**13** Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and **He Himself does not tempt anyone.**”

1. God commanded Satan to torment King Saul,

1 Samuel 16:14-16 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **14** Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an **evil spirit from the Lord** terrorized him. **15** Saul's servants then said to him, “Behold now, an **evil spirit from God** is terrorizing you. **16** Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the **evil spirit from God** is on you, that he shall play *the harp* with his hand, and you will be well.”

Saul was tormented not by God but an evil spirit from God. God used Satan to discipline King Saul.

2. God sent an evil spirit between Shechem and Abimelech to make them fight each other.

Judges 9:23 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **23** Then **God sent an evil spirit** between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem **dealt treacherously** with Abimelech.

3. God sent a lying spirit to mislead Ahab.

1 Kings 22:23 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **23** Now therefore, behold, the **Lord has put a deceiving spirit** in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you.”

Surely this was a lying spirit of Satan, for God is not a liar, but Satan is John 8:44.

4. God gave Satan permission to sift Peter,

Luke 22:31-32 King James 31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan has asked to sift you as wheat**; 32 But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Poor Peter, wanting to appear to be better than the other disciples said, "Although all shall be scandalized in you, not me." Jesus wanted to help Peter to become more humble and allowed Satan to shake him. Satan caused Peter to lie and deny the Lord. But of course, Peter **did not lose his salvation or his ministry**. Actually before the denial Jesus advised him "when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." That meant, "*When you turned back from the denial*".

5. Satan was charged by God to pierce and slap Paul.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **7** "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a **thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me**—to keep me from exalting myself! **8** Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. **9** And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

As we see, God does not personally try anyone Himself, but he uses Satan for that. Satan is a specialist at temptation ever since the Garden of Eden and he loves it!

6. Is Satan the anger of the Lord? Compare 2 Samuel 24:1-3 with 1 Chronicles 21:1-3. The two books have the same story, but one says it was the "***wrath of the Lord who rose against Israel***" and induced David to count the people, and another says that "***Satan stood up against Israel***" and incited David to count the people. Here are the two Scriptures for comparison:

2 Samuel 24:1-3,15 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **1** Now again **the anger of the Lord burned against Israel**, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." **2** The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people." **3** But Joab said to the king, "Now may the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are,

while the eyes of my lord the king *still* see; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?"...

15 So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and **seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.**

1 Chronicles 21:1-3,14 New American Standard Bible **1** Then **Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.** **2** So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me *word* that I may know their number." **3** Joab said, "May the Lord add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"... **14** So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel; **70,000 men of Israel fell.**

Who tempted David to number the people, **the anger of the Lord or Satan?** 2 Samuel says it was the "anger of the Lord" and 1 Chronicles says it was "Satan" There are three explanations for this difference. First, that this is a Biblical **contradiction**, second, that it is a **mistake** of one of the writers (Prophet Samuel wrote 2 Samuel and it is believed that Ezra wrote 1 Chronicles), or third, both are correct and therefore **Satan is the wrath of God**. As we do not believe that the Scriptures contradict each other or are mistaken, we can only believe that both are right. Also, as we have seen, God uses Satan to discipline His people. Therefore Satan is the anger of the Lord, as we have already seen in many other cases, (Saul, Abimelech, Ahab, Peter, Paul, immoral at Corinthian, Job). **Satan is the wrath of God**, as he was in all cases we have already mentioned.

7. The case of Job is the one that more clearly explains this relationship between Satan and God in order to discipline, build character, or just hurt a person or a people to test their faith, as in the case of Job:

Job 1:6-12 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. **7** The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." **8** The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." **9** Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing? **10** Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **11** But put forth **Your hand** now and touch all

that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." **12** Then the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has **is in your power**, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

Curiously, Satan told God "put forth **Your hand** now and touch all that he has". It was Satan who had the idea of hurting Job. And God said to Satan, "all that he has **is in your power** but do put forth your hand on him." Satan was given power over his possessions but not over his body. I do not want to speculate on just words here, but Satan tells God: "Stretch out your hand" and then God tells Satan "all that he has **is in your power**," Who extends his hand over poor Job, God or Satan? It may be that **when the Bible says that God extends his hand to punish it is really Satan's hand which is extended** with the permission of God. Because we saw that the "*wrath of the Lord*" is Satan. Furthermore it seems more understandable that God does not do those punishments directly but, of course, he authorizes them. This reminds me of a teacher trying to explain why in Proverbs 13:24, Solomon's advice is to punish the children with a stick. If you punish with the hand on the child, it produces a **hatred of his father's hand**, but using a rod, the child **hates the rod**. God does not punish himself, but authorizes Satan who is the rod of God. Some of the other of the many encounters between God and Satan are recorded in chapter two of the book of Job:

Job 2:1-7 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **1** Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. **2** The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." **3** The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although **you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.**" **4** Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. **5** However, **put forth Your hand** now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." **6** So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, **he is in your power**, only spare his life." **7** Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Note again that Satan tells God "***stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh***" and God replies, "***he is in your hand***". Obviously it is Satan's hand that touches us, not God's. But Satan is authorized by God to do so. Obviously God and Satan talk very often. Surely he spoke with Satan to discipline Paul ^{2 Corinthians 12:7-9}, Peter also Luke 22:31-32 and perhaps many more! Surely they also have talked about me, perhaps several times! I believe that when Satan accuses me before God and says to the Lord "***stretch out your hand on Juan Carlos***", Satan knows that it will be ***his hand*** that will be extended, and he is delighted. Note also that in this Scripture, God say to Satan: "***you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause***". **What is this relationship between God and Satan?**

Another thing that stands out in these passages is the type of conversation between God and Satan. They **don't get nervous**, they **do not fight**, God **doesn't throw Satan to the abyss**, He does **not trample on him** nor **binds** or **curses** him. They just seem to talk in a kind of *friendly manner*. And **why is Satan even present** at these important meetings of the "sons of God," the Divine cabinet, as if he is one of them? Obviously God as Father does not hate him and allows him to continue attending the meetings of the "**sons of God**." I believe that Satan just attends to **accuse us before God of our wrongdoings** because he is the "*accuser of the brethren, who **accuses us before God day and night***" Revelation 12:10. This means **continuously** so he can get more jobs, jobs that he loves to do. Satan is like a rebellious son that abandons the house and but only appears at the Christmas party. He is not repentant like the prodigal son, but the Father talks with him nonetheless without fighting. In Satan case he is working hard taking note of our failures and rushing to God to accuse us. I also believe that God allows him in those meetings because he uses Him as a rod to discipline us.

8. How do **you** treat Satan? Notice what the apostle Judas says in his short epistle:

Jude 1:8-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **8** Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and **reject authority**, and **revile angelic majesties**. **9** But Michael the archangel, when he **disputed with the devil** and argued about the body of Moses, **did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment**, but said, "**The Lord rebuke you!**" **10** But these men **revile the things**

which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

Good News Translation (GNT) **8** In the same way also, these people have visions which make them sin against their own bodies; they despise God's authority and insult the glorious beings above. **9 Not even the chief angel Michael did this. In his quarrel with the Devil, when they argued about who would have the body of Moses, Michael did not dare condemn the Devil with insulting words, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"** **10** But these people attack with insults anything they do not understand; and those things that they know by instinct, like wild animals, are the very things that destroy them.

I have trouble understanding the practice in Pentecostal services of fighting with the devil, sending him to the Abyss, dry places, tying him, trampling on him, etc., **when God Himself speaks to him without getting nervous and Archangels, dare not rebuke him**. Surely the Lord does not allow it because Satan is a rebellious son, but still a son; rebellious brother but still a "brother" of the other angels, who still attends the meetings of the highest ranking angels Job 1:6, 2:1 Luke 22:31-32. Evidently when other angelic beings deal with Satan, they do not abuse him, but respect him as an angelic being and leave the punishment in the hands of God Jude 1:9. I have been in big events where every preacher tied the devil, but obviously he was unleashed, because the next day they had to bind him again!

As Satan loves to annoy people he will always accuse someone before God hoping that God will punish him, then Satan offers himself to do the job of punishing himself, so God uses him for that. Job, Saul, Paul, Peter, the young immoral of Corinth, Hymenaeus and Alexander, Ananias and Sapphira, etc., were tested in this way. So every time we do not behave as we should, Satan runs to God asking him to give him the little job of punishing, as he did with Peter Luke 22:31-32. I personally think that Satan has asked God to shake me as wheat many times, and I think that happens to every minister who is applauded in the pulpit, so that we remain broken and humble. I know many successful ministers who walk on this earth with a thorn in their flesh.

9. God commands Abraham to kill his son Isaac. Based on all this Biblical evidence that Satan sees God continuously and has access to speak to Him, and

that God uses him to test His people, I wonder if it was the same with Abraham. Often God asking Abraham to kill his beloved son occurs to me. It's so rare that God himself would ask for a **human sacrifice**! Human sacrifices were always **pagan and satanic**. It is quite possible that to test the faith of Abraham, as he did to test the faith of Job, **God gave Satan this little job to test the faith of Abraham**, and Satan, who always wanted to ruin or cut the genealogical line of Christ, decided to chose Abraham's beloved son Isaac as the human sacrifice. This is why just before Abraham lifted the knife over Isaac, God stopped him. You say that the Bible says it was God who tried Abraham but look at these texts:

Genesis 22:1-2 King James Version (KJV) **1** And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt Abraham**, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. **2** And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and **offer him there for a burnt offering** upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

But James says very clearly: James 1:13 New King James Version (NKJV) 13 "Let no one say when he is tempted, **I am tempted of God**; for God cannot be tempted with evil and **He himself tempts no one**."

If God "**himself tempts no one**" who tempted Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice? Job also thought it was God who was testing him Job 1:21. Most of us usually think that God is testing us when we go through a misfortune. James says that God **cannot** be tempted and that "**he himself tempts no one**". We know from the case of Job, Peter, Paul and others that the testing, or tempting was done by the hands of the Devil, but we also know that everything was permitted by God so that James is right, "**God Himself tempts no one**." He personally does not, but does it through the Devil, but God allows it. What happens is that Satan masquerades as an angel of light 2 Corinthians 11:14, because he himself is an angel and also wants to make people believe that it is God who is doing the punishing. In fact, God tests us through Satan. Our consolation is that we are not at the mercy of the Devil, because our Father God supervises everything and sets the limits. On the one hand, God believes we need to be disciplined to purify us, but on the other hand Paul says that "*He will not let us be tempted **beyond what we can bear***" 1 Corinthians 10:13. Paul is a great example. God knew that Paul had a tendency to be proud and so He allowed Satan to buffet him. But Paul himself recognized at the end that he really had a tendency to be proud and that God was right in allowing an angel of Satan to torment him to keep him humble. This is clear in the case of Paul. We should

learn from Paul how to react to the tests of life. So it makes more sense to me that the idea to test Abraham's faith with a human sacrifice was not God's idea, but Satan's, and God **put the limit when He stopped the knife!**

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 New American Standard Bible **7** Because of the **surpassing greatness of the revelations**, for this reason, **to keep me from exalting myself**, there was given me a **thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!** **8** Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. **9** And He has said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."** Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses**, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

I would wish to react as Paul did when he realized that his thorn in the flesh, that made him weak, was to maintain his humility: "I will rather **boast about my weaknesses**, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." Is this not perhaps what James recommends? James 1:2-4. We are tempted to boast about our successes, but the power to succeed is precisely when we feel weak or even unworthy. We recognize that we can't in ourselves do anything to stop our misfortune and that our success is not because of our holiness or perfection that God uses us Acts 3:12.16 but by His grace. Though we cannot prevent people from applauding us, in our innermost conscience when we are alone, we always humble ourselves and give the glory to God for the success, because *"when I am weak, then I am strong"* 2 Corinthians 12:10. Many times we have seen spiritual giants fall down. Don't judge them, God is humbling them for their benefit. They are not losing their salvation, but like Peter, Paul and others are being perfected, and **with the help of Satan!**

What does James say?

James 1:2-4 Living Bible (TLB) **2** Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, **3** for **when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow.** **4** So let it grow, and **don't try to squirm out of your problems.** For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then **you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete.**

10. How to avoid discipline when we fail. If we are disciplined for a single action, such as taking the sacrament of communion unworthily, before going to the

Table of the Lord we should confess our faults, reconcile with who offended us and make restitution when we have offended others. This frees us from the discipline, because if we confess and receive forgiveness, God withdraws the discipline ^{1 Corinthians 11:28, 31-32}. However, in Paul's case he was receiving great revelations daily, having the privilege of defining the universal Christian theology, experiencing the visitation of angels, visions, healing the sick, raising the dead, exorcisms, neutralize the poisonous effect of snakes bites, etc. All this and more. For Paul it was not an isolated action, but a permanent condition or temptation of pride. Paul **needed a constant alarm** or "thorn" to continually remind him that all he had was by grace and not his intelligence or his own merit, thereby avoiding arrogance and keeping him humble ^{2 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Corinthians 15:10}.

E. WHO GAVE THE LAW TO MOSES?

Please this is a very unusual comment, but if you analyze it very carefully, this may end up answering many questions that you have not only about the Law of Moses but also regarding the character of God. The God in the Old Testament is vengeful and jealous, in the New Testament He is gracious and generous. Which is the true character of God? This thesis will help to answer that question.

1. This chapter is deeper. My purpose is not to change your mind but to **make you think** if what I am going to share **may be so or may not be so**. It is a merely a **thesis**. But it could answer many questions if you have a nosy mind like mine! I leave it in your hands for you to do what you want. It is an essay, but it is very interesting! **If God uses Satan to discipline** all believers when they make mistakes or misbehave, and **God has also punished nations**, it is quite possible that God punished or disciplined the **entire nation of Israel for their transgressions** and **Satan was used for that work** as He was in many instances. This could explain the negative characteristics of the Law of Moses and the vast difference between the God that **Moses describes** in the Old Testament with the God that **His son Jesus Christ and His Apostles describe** in the New Testament.

Carefully read the text of **Galatians 3:19**, given what we've learned not in one but in many Biblical passages that **God uses Satan to test or discipline His people**, because "**He Himself does not tempt anyone**" James 1:13.

Galatians 3:19 NIV "19 So what was the **purpose** of the law? **It was added because of transgressions** until the seed should come to whom the promise was made. The law was enacted by angels, through a mediator (The mediator: Moses, John 1:17).

The Law had a **purpose**. Evidently the purpose was a **discipline** for their **transgressions**. This is very solid food, think! Since the Law of Moses was merciless, under the Law of Moses the wrath of God (Satan) was downloaded many times killing thousands of Jews and non-Jews both during the exodus and then in the promised land. The Law of Moses commanded the Jews to kill, sometimes for very simple things, like gathering sticks to make a fire on the Sabbath Numbers 15:32-36. It required them to hate their enemies Matthew 5:43, which only caused their enemies to hate them, and to kill men, women and children to conquer a city Joshua 6:21. The Law of Moses commanded them to take their swords and kill brothers, friends and neighbors as punishment for worshiping the golden calf Exodus 32:27-29. The Law of Moses ordered a terrible plague that killed 70,000 men (perhaps 140,000 counting women and children) in punishment because David incited by the wrath of the Lord took a census of the people 2 Samuel 24:1 or Satan 1 Chronicles 21:1, and by a destroying angel 1 Chronicles 21:15.

2. Two different Gods? Generally the punishment that was ordered was disproportionate to the offense, as in the case of the census, which killed more than 140,000 Jews. Many times I have wondered looking at the behavior of God as described by Moses, Joshua and the prophets: a jealous and vengeful God Exodus 20:5, when compared with God as described by our Lord Jesus Christ, who commands us not to be jealous or vindictive, to love our enemy, turn the other cheek when we are slapped, forgive those who trespass against us, return good for evil, bless those who curse us and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us – **is it the same God?** Or are there two different interpretations of the same God? Who knows God better, Moses or His Son Jesus Christ? John 1:18, 6:46, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:2-4.

James helps us to discern between what comes from God and what comes from Satan, the Grace and Law:

James 3:14-18 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **14** But if you have **bitter jealousy** and **selfish ambition** in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth. **15** **This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.** **16** For where **jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.** **17** But the **wisdom from above** is first **pure,** then **peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy** and **good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.** **18** And the seed whose fruit is **righteousness** is sown in **peace** by **those who make peace.**

How different is the interpretation of God given by Moses in the Old Testament and of God described by His Son Jesus Christ in the New Testament!

John 1:18 New American Standard Bible **18** *No one has seen God at any time; **the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.***" John 3:13, John 6:46.

Jesus is the only one who has ever seen God as He is. So I choose to believe that God's character is as presented by His Son Jesus; not as God is presented by Moses.

Hebrews 1:1-3 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **1** *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,** whom He appointed **heir of all things,** through whom also He made the world. **3** And **He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature,** and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

Colossians 1:15-20 New American Standard Bible **15** *He (Jesus) **is the image of the invisible God,** the firstborn of all creation. **16** For **by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.** **17** **He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.** **18** He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. **19** For **it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,** **20** and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made*

peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether **things on earth or things in heaven.**

There is no doubt that the description that Jesus makes of His Father has more authority ^{Hebrews 3:5-6} than Moses's presentation. It is Jesus who said, "**For God so loved the world...**" The God presented by Moses is jealous and vengeful ^{Exodus 20:5} and the God who showed us Jesus is a God of love and grace ^{John 3:16}. Who knows God better – Moses or Jesus? Why is the Law of Moses so damaging, negative and frightening? And why did Jesus have to totally refashion the Law of Moses in the Sermon on the Mount?

I can think of **two** answers to this difference between God as presented by Moses and God as presented by Jesus, Moses was surrounded since childhood with many jealous and vindictive gods, so he thought that God should also be like them. Even in his time Paul had to clarify that those "*other gods*" that Moses talked about did not exist at all. It is admirable the depth of Paul's wisdom compared to Moses. Moses gave importance to the "other" gods ^{Exodus 20:3}. The phrase "other gods" is mentioned 23 times from Exodus to Deuteronomy. But Paul says those gods "**do not exist**".

1 Corinthians 8:4-7 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **4** *Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that **there is no such thing as an idol in the world**, and that **there is no God but one**.* **5** *For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, **6** yet **for us there is but one God, the Father**, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; **and one Lord, Jesus Christ**, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. **7** However **not all men have this knowledge**; but some, **being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol**; and their conscience being weak is defiled.*

It is strange that God could be **jealous** when He knows that there is no other God. Jealous of whom or what? Jealous of something that does not exist? Apart from God, there is only one other spiritual person called god in the New Testament: that's "Satan" and his demons. Satan is the "*god of this world*" 2 Corinthians 4:4. Therefore, because there is only one true God, those who sacrifice to idols or any other "god" that doesn't exist, are sacrificing to Satan and to demons because **there are no other gods!**

1 Corinthians 10:19-20 New American Standard Bible **19** What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? **20 *No***, but *I say* that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, **they sacrifice to demons** and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

3. How many Gods are there? The poor Jews were surrounded by different peoples who had their different "gods" that were pieces of wood or metal. So unknowingly they were worshiping demons because there are no other gods. Even the early Jewish Christian Church still gave importance to idols as if they **were** gods Acts 15:20. Jewish believers were forbidden to eat food offered to idols Acts 15:29, which made their life more difficult, because the slaughterhouses were in the pagan temples where animals were offered in sacrifice to their "gods" and from there they took the meat to the butcher's. So when Paul taught the Gentiles who believed the truth of Christ and came out of paganism, he taught that their gods did not exist and gave them the freedom to eat any meat, since that meat was sacrificed to pieces of wood or metal, it was sacrificed to "**nothing**" because these gods do not exist. Yet Paul asks Gentile believers not to use their freedom to eat that meat when Jewish believers were present if they believed it was a sin to eat meat because they were still conscious of the idol, based in Moses:

1 Corinthians 10:25-33 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market** without asking questions for conscience' sake; **26** for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains. **27** If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, **eat anything that is set before you without asking questions** for conscience' sake. **28** But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed *you*, and for conscience' sake; **29** I mean not your own conscience, but the other *man's*, for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? **30** If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? **31** Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all **to the glory of God**. **32** Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; **33** just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.

Paul indicates that as the other gods **did not exist**, to forego eating meat offered to something that does not exist is offering it to **nothing**. But he also warns that there are some Jews believers who are still weak and conscious of the idols. They do not have this knowledge yet and still give importance to idols as Moses did, negative importance of course, but importance. Those who have this knowledge must be friendly to the Christian Jews and not use their freedom in Christ to scandalize the Jewish brothers (read Romans 14:1-23 where this is explained in detail).

Back to our topic: It would seem that in the Old Testament, although Jews said they believed in one God, they were aware of other gods and often tempted to worshiped them as Aaron, brother of Moses did, worshiping the golden calf, behind which, according to Paul, they were worshipping demons Exodus 32:1-6. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush Moses, raised in polytheism, asked God for His name to identify Him among the many gods he knew. God said to him that He had no name, that **He is what He is**, (because if there is only one God alone, He does not need to have a name, He Is God!). God finally answered that His name is YHWH which means **I AM** Exodus 3:13-15.

Since YHWH is unpronounceable, they later added some vocals in between to make it pronounceable and ended up being Jahveh or Jehovah, a mixture of YHWH and Adonai (Lord).

Who knows God better Moses or Jesus? Surely it is Jesus. And why the Law of Moses is so negative and harmful? I tentatively believe that one of the reasons may be that Moses interpretation of God is given in the context of the other "gods". For example, Hammurabi gave a law with the same sound "eye for eye" 400 years before Moses. Christ, who has been with God from eternity, gave us the real and true nature of: a God of love and grace.

4. God uses Satan to punish Israel for their transgressions. Another answer may be that according to St. Paul the Law of Moses was a discipline from God to Israel because of their transgressions, *"the law was added because of transgressions"* Galatians 3:19 and that the law was given by *"means of angels"* Galatians 3:19, Acts 7:38, 53; Hebrews 2:2, Exodus 3:2. Do we remember **whom God used to punish His people?** Satan. And which god and which angels dominate our planet Ephesians 5:12, 1 John 5:19 and saw that God used him and his angels to discipline and punish His children, and also gave him permission to afflict Job Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7, Saul 1 Samuel 16:14-16 Luke 22:31-32 Peter, Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, etc.? Yes, Satan. Also, comparing **2 Samuel 24:1-3 and 1 Chronicles 21:1-3** suggests that **the Wrath of God is Satan**. Could it be that God also commissioned Satan to discipline the nation of Israel for their transgressions with something that constantly would overwhelm them, a law impossible to completely obey and then punish them with the severest penalties Hebrews 10:28 and horrible curses if they disobeyed Deuteronomy 28:15-68? Until today the Jews still suffer, because they cannot offer animal sacrifices for their sins to clear their consciences, nor have a temple for worship. Was all this hoping that

one day they would feel the need of the grace of God? The law was a terrible punishment! In this case, what Moses thought was God, may have been Satan.

Why do I think that it is quite possible that God has entrusted Satan, as he always does, to discipline Israel? I think this not only because this **is the way that God always disciplined** His people, but mostly because of **the inhuman, ruthless and cruel nature of the Law of Moses and the impossibility of it being kept.**

5. Let us see first of all, the attitude of Jesus the Son of God and Paul the great Theologian, toward the Law of Moses:

By the way Jesus dealt with the Law of Moses it is very difficult to believe that God himself gave it. Would Jesus contradict His Father? Never! Matthew 11:27, John 5:17, 19-23, etc. Neither Jesus nor Paul praised the law. On the contrary, they denounced and carelessly criticized it showing its negative and harmful reality. Let's see:

Jesus criticizes without reservation the Law of Moses:

He said: The Law says: "Thou shalt not kill", **but I say** just if you get "angry" with your brother or say "foolish" or "fool" to him you are worthy of death Matthew 5:21-22.

The law says: "Do not commit adultery." Jesus corrects saying it should be "one who looks at a woman lustfully" has already committed adultery Matthew 5:27-28.

The law allowed divorce for any reason. Jesus limited it to a single cause Matthew 5:31-32.

The law obliged fulfilling your oaths. Jesus forbids making oaths Matthew 5:33-37.

Law says to pay "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" Exodus 21:23-25. Jesus commands us to turn the other cheek and forgive the trespasses Matthew 5:38-42.

The law commands the Jew to love his neighbor, i.e. the other Jews Leviticus 19:18, but hate the enemies Deuteronomy 23:3-6. Jesus, by contrast, commanded us to love the enemies Matthew 5:43-47.

The law commanded us to kill anyone who works on Saturday Exodus 31:14. Jesus questioned this Luke 14:3-6 and said that He was Lord of the Sabbath Matthew 12:1-8. He added: "Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man" Mark 2:27-28. The life of man is superior to the Sabbath. However Moses commanded us to kill those who did something on the Saturdays.

Although Jesus said things about the law that bothered much of His listeners, new shocking revelations that the Spirit would give the Apostles, especially Paul, would be even stronger and irreconcilable with Jews. Jesus said, *"I have yet many things to say, but now you can not bear it. When the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth..."* John 16:12-15. Surely, when Jesus said this, He had Paul in mind.

One of the things that Paul attacked even more was something that was very sacred to the Jews: The Law of Moses. Paul not only shows the futility of the law to bring salvation, but how pernicious it is.

God is a merciful God. The law has no mercy, sent to kill those who do not comply with it Hebrews 10:28.

For example, God commanded Moses to stone adulterous women Deuteronomy 22:21-24; John 8:3-11 and adulterous men Leviticus 20:10. Jesus disobeyed the Law of Moses by forgiving the adulterous woman John 8:3-11.

The Law cannot change us Romans 8:3-4.

The Law empowers sin 1 Corinthians 15:56,

The Law curses us Galatians 3:10

6. Who is the author of the following curses? If you can read the following, which is part of the Law of Moses, then go ahead and read it. But many people break down while reading it, so read it as far as possible, but please read at least some to understand why I quote this passage. Many times while reading this passage I grieve. Let us see what it produces in you. If you can do it, then read this passage. Although it is not pleasant, it will help you to understand my thesis better. This chapter has **68** verses. The first **14** verses are about the earthly blessings you will receive if you keep all the commandments of the Law of Moses. The following **54 horrible verses** are the earthly curses you would receive if you do not keep all the commandments of the Law of Moses. This is what Paul refers to in Galatians 3:13.

Deuteronomy 28:15-68 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **15** "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: **16** "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. **17** "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. **18** "Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. **19** "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

20 "The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. **21** The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. **22** The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. **23** The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. **24** The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

25 "The Lord shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be *an example of* terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. **26** Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten *them* away.

27 "The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. **28** The Lord will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; **29** and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you. **30** You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit. **31** Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it; your donkey shall be torn away from you, and will not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you will have none to save you. **32** Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and yearn for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do. **33** A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually. **34** You shall be driven mad by the sight of what you see. **35** The Lord will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. **36** The Lord will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. **37** You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the Lord drives you.

38 "You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it. **39** You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather *the grapes*, for the worm will devour them. **40** You shall have olive trees throughout your

territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off. **41** You shall have sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity. **42** The cricket shall possess all your trees and the produce of your ground. **43** The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower. **44** He shall lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you will be the tail.

45 "So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. **46** They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever.

47 "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; **48** therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

49 "The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, **50** a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. **51** Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. **52** It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the Lord your God has given you. **53** Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you. **54** The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain, **55** so that he will not give *even* one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing *else* left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in all your towns. **56** The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter, **57** and toward her afterbirth which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything *else*, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in your towns.

58 "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, **59** then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. **60** He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. **61** Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the Lord will bring on you until you are destroyed. **62** Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the Lord your God. **63** It shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. **64** Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. **65** Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. **66** So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. **67** In the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!' because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see. **68** The Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

What kind of mentality would dictate these curses? Can you imagine Jesus saying these things? Impossible! This seems to be written by a psychopath. This is why I connect the Law of Moses more to Satan than to God. Again, God is using Satan to discipline his people.

7. Compare the list of curses from the "God" of Moses with the Spirit of grace of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: It is just the opposite:

Ephesians 1:3-12 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, **4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace **8** which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight **9** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **10** with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is,* the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him **11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, **12** to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

And what He says in Romans 8:28-39, about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and us:

Romans 8:28-39 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. **31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? **32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? **33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; **34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. **35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? **36** Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all

day long; ^{SEP} We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37** But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 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.

It also tells us in the New Testament:

“Bless and do not curse” Romans 12:14, 1 Corinthians 4:12. Paul's answer to all the curses in the Law of Moses is:

Galatians 3:10, 13 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **10** For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them. **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—”

Hallelujah! God sent Jesus to redeem us from the curse of the law! If the Law of Moses was the work of God, why does Jesus come to redeem us from His law? He would be working against His Father! Jesus on the Cross canceled the curses of the Law of Moses:

Colossians 2:13-15 Living Bible (TLB) **13** You were dead in sins, and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then he gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for he forgave all your sins, 14 and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of his commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. **15** In this way God took away Satan's power to accuse you of sin, and God openly displayed to the whole world Christ's triumph at the cross where your sins were all taken away.

The "certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us" is the Law of Moses and what Jesus did was *“to take it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.”*

And Paul relates this victory as a triumph over Satan and his angels, *"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them through Him."* Ephesians 4:8-9.

Let's see what the Apostle Paul says about the Law of Moses, it is nothing cute:

The law does not justify anyone Galatians 2:16.

The law brings wrath Romans 4:15

The law produces sins Romans 5:13.

The law curses and doesn't forgive Romans 7:7.

The law resulted is death Romans 7:10.

The law is defective Hebrews 8:6-7.

The law was temporary, Galatians 3:19.

The law is useless, Hebrews 7:18-19.

The Law aged Hebrews 8:13.

The law does not let us get into God's rest Hebrews 4:10,

The law doesn't make anyone perfect Hebrews 10:1,

The law must be thrown out of the Church Galatians 4:24-31,

The Law can make us fall from grace Galatians 5:4,

The law kills 2 Corinthians 3:6,

The Law has a ministry of death 2 Corinthians 3:7,

Whoever disobeys the law inevitably have to die Hebrews 10:28.

Without the law sin is dead, the law gives life to sin Romans 7:8.

Christ is the end of the Law Romans 10:4.

We have died to the law Galatians 2:19:20.

We are free from the law Romans 7:6.

We are not under the law Romans 6:14.

The Jews sought to kill Christ based on the Law of Moses: *"The Jews answered him. We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God"* John 19:7.

The law was not given to believers but for those who oppose the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles 1 Timothy 1:9-11.

Those who rely on observing the law are under a curse Galatians 3:10.

We must live according to the Spirit, not according to the Law Gal. 5:16, 22-25.

The law has no place in God's plan because it leaves Christ out of that plan
Galatians 2:21.

Christ came to redeem us from Satan and from every religious system, of which the Law is representative Galatians 4:4-5.

Neighboring pagan peoples had something close to the Law of Moses. King Hammurabi of Babylon nearly 400 years before Moses was said to have received its legal code also from his god, and is also based on the law of retaliation, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth". Hammurabi served idols so that according to St. Paul, behind those idols were demons 1 Corinthians 10:20.

8. Law and Grace oppose each other. Could they come from the same person?

James 3:11 New American Standard Bible **11** Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*?"

Law and Grace are incompatible. The God who gave Moses the law does not forgive, but condemns and kills. This is not the same God who reveals His Son, who comes to give abundant life to sinners Ephesians 2:1, Colossians 2:13, and the God of the Apostles who tell us that "*God is love*" 1 John 4:8 and forgiveness Acts 13:38, does not impute our sins 2 Corinthians 5:19 but gives us eternal life to us, although wicked and not deserving it, saving us not by our works but because he loved us before creating us. "*He predestined us, called us, justified, glorified us and sat together in the heavenly places in Christ.*" Romans 4:5; 8:29-30; Ephesians 2:6; 2 Timothy 1:9-10.

Because of the Law of Moses, millions have lived for centuries with a continuous sense of guilt, killing millions of animals to escape the guilt that overwhelmed them. In **one day** Solomon sacrificed **22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep** ^{1 Kings 8; 62-63,} creating rivers of blood from those altars. He was obviously aware of his and his nation's sins. And more, the spirit of that Law has filtered into the church and made many Christian doubt their eternal salvation. But the writer of Hebrews says: "*For it is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*" ^{Hebrews 10:4.} **Jesus did it because God loved us!**

"Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because 'the righteous will live by faith.'" ^{Galatians 3:11}

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" ^{Hebrews 10:14.}

How different is the grace of Jesus Christ and the Law of Moses! It has to be that as Satan ruined the lives of Job and many others, though with God's permission, through the Law, with God's permission also, he ruined the lives of the poor Jews and is still ruining the lives of legalistic believers today. Those who do not understand even a little of God's grace still think they have to gain it by being good instead of by grace and consequently have not entered the into the rest God:

Hebrews 4:9-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **9** So **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.**
10 For the one who has **entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.**

The commandments of the Law of Moses and the plan of salvation that Jesus and His Apostles gave us are opposed and irreconcilable. They **cannot be**

mixed! They are such opposites that the Law of Moses **may even make us fall from grace!** Galatians 5:4.

If by the works of the law no person can be justify before God because it is impossible to keep it and everybody is under condemnation Galatians 3:11, Romans 7:10, it means that the one who gave the Law of Moses is not someone who loved us and desired the best for us, but one who wanted to **ruin our existence**. But Grace instead forgives us, gives us eternal salvation, fills us with the Holy Spirit, transforms us and gives us eternal life. This surely has to come from someone who loves us dearly, to the point of dying for us and who wants us to live with Him forever. This is the God or our Lord Jesus Christ! It is inconsistent to think that the same God who gave the unforgiving Law of Moses, which condemns and kills, is also revealed through His Son and His Apostles as a God of grace, who forgives, justifies and gives life to the ungodly Romans 4:4-10 without them deserving it Romans 5:6-10, not by works but by sheer grace Romans 4:5, Ephesians 2:8-10.

Poor are those who live under any religion based on obedience to a law without grace and without a savior. They live under a continuous sense of guilt about the security of their salvation and some may not even have knowledge of salvation. But it saddens me that even after the revelations of Jesus, in the minds of many believers there is a mixture of law and grace that hinders them from resting from their works Hebrews 4:9-10. God has not changed Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8. He is the same from eternity to eternity. I believe the God of the New Testament is the same God of the Old Testament but accurately revealed by His own Son Jesus Christ. The ethics that Jesus and His Apostles taught are very different than those taught by the Law of Moses, also the plan of salvation. Under the law there is no plan of salvation. **Beware!** The Law of

Moses is so damaging, that if we are not careful it can make us fall from grace!

Galatians 5:4.

The Law of Moses teaches:

"Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, blow for blow." Exodus 21:23-25,

Jesus opposes all this in a very clear way, citing the same passage of Exodus. He says:

Matthew 5:38-42 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **38** *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'* **39** **But I say to you**, *do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*

How can the same God say opposite things? Jesus, in Matthew 5:21-48 does nothing to avoid teaching differently from what the Law of Moses taught and He does not do it in secret. He clearly says: ***"the law says, but I say"*** and closes this passage, exhorting us to be not like Moses but as **our heavenly Father"** Matthew 5:48. Which version of the Heavenly Father do you like, the one of Moses or the one of Jesus Christ our Lord who brought us grace?

John 1:14-18 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **14** And **the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us**, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full of grace and truth**. **15** John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" **16** For **of His fullness** we have all received, and **grace upon grace**. **17** For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.** **18** No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him.**

The mediator of the Law was Moses Galatians 3:19. The mediator of grace is Jesus Christ Ephesians 1:4-7. I know that these statements about the Law of Moses are hard for many of you. But it's not me, but the Holy Scriptures who say all these things, but for whatever reason we have ignored it. Whatever the Law of Moses requires, its curses and punishments are characteristic of Satan more than of God. So it is very possible that just as God used Satan to try to punish and discipline many saints of the Bible, Satan also used the Law of Moses to try to punish and discipline Israel without poor Moses knowing it 2 Corinthians 11:14. Of course you **should not accept this if it is difficult for you to bear**, this is just a thesis. Whatever we say or don't say God will remain God and Satan will remain Satan until God throws him into the lake of fire. Grace will still remain grace. But this study is interesting because it takes away the idea of a God with a double personality: jealous, vengeful and unforgiving personality in the Old Testament and a forgiving and loving God in the New Testament. This is what confuses Jews and even us.

Imagine comparing the God who gave the curses that we read in Deuteronomy 28:15-68, compared with Ephesians 1:3-12, Romans 8:28-39 and the entire New Testament!

Ephesians 1:3-12 New American Standard Bible 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ,

things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

And...

Romans 8:28-39 New American Standard Bible 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; ~~is~~ We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 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.

9. Satan hate saints. Clearly, God uses Satan when he wants to discipline His people. He does not do the discipline himself. But I believe Satan does the worst he can, more than God would like sometimes. God told him about Job: *"And he (Job) still holds fast his integrity, although **you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.**"* Job 1:1, 2:3 Satan incited God against Job, because he hates saints, Job was: *"**blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.**"* Job 2:3. This is why he hated him and did his best to destroy him. God said first: *"touch his things but not his body"* Satan took away everything, but more than things, he took even

his children and employees! The second time God said: *"touch what you want in his body but not his life."* Satan made it the worst he could. Job was almost dead. Satan is very evil, he always adds more to the suffering he causes. My purpose in this thesis, is to **unveil our hearts in order to see** the difference between the Law of Moses that condemns and kills and the grace of Christ that transforms and gives life, when we read the Bible in order to serve God in the **new way** of the Spirit with an ***unveiled face*** and not in the **old way** of the letter with a veil over our heart; Christ in us, the Holy Spirit will start to guide us *"Christ in you, the hope of glory" Colossians 1:27.*

2 Corinthians 3:14-17 New International Version **14** But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same **veil remains** when the old covenant is read. **It has not been removed**, because **only in Christ is it taken away**. **15** Even to this day **when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts**. **16** But whenever **anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away**. **17** Now **the Lord is the Spirit**, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

10. The opening day of the Law of Moses gives us an idea of who the true giver of the Law is. If God Himself would had been inaugurating such an important event, the giving of the law, the opening day would have been a **day of great celebration, parades, music, banquets, a holiday of joy and festivity**. His angels would have prepared a wonderful liturgy with an angelic chorale and orchestra. But it was quite the opposite. It seems **as if the liturgy was prepared by demons** because it was a **horribly dark and turbulent day!** While the Law of Moses was being received in the "sacred" mountain the people of Israel at the foot of the mountain made a **golden calf idol** and began to worship it with a **wild** pagan liturgy prepared by demons. Moses comes down the mountain and seeing this breaks the tablets of the Law that

God himself apparently had written. The "God" of Moses gets angry and in his anger commanded:

Exodus 32:27-28 New American Standard Bible (NASB) **27** *He said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'"*
28 *So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

What an inauguration for something so "sacred!" The writer to the Hebrews portrays the contrast between the reception ceremony of the **Law** from Moses and the reception ceremony of **grace** from Jesus Christ:

The liturgy of the inauguration of the Law of Moses was something sinister:

Hebrews 12:18-21 New American Standard Bible. **18** *For you have not come to a **mountain that can be touched** and to a **blazing fire**, and to **darkness and gloom and whirlwind**, **19** and to the **blast of a trumpet** and the sound of words which **sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them**. **20** For **they could not bear the command**, "*if even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.*" **21** And so **terrible was the sight**, that Moses said, "*I am full of fear and trembling.*"*

What an inauguration! Doesn't it sound Satanic instead of Godly?

11. Presenting grace was something heavenly:

Hebrews 12:22-24 New American Standard Bible **22** *But you have come to **Mount Zion** and to the **city of the living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to **myriads of angels**, **23** to the **general assembly and church of the firstborn** who are **enrolled in heaven**, and **to God, the Judge of all**, and to the*

spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** and to *Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant*, and to the *sprinkled blood*, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

What a contrast! Between the lawgiver and the giver of grace! Please read again these two Scriptures and meditate on the different liturgy!

The inauguration of the Law of Moses:

Mountain that cannot be touched, it was material, blazing fire, darkness and gloom and whirlwind, blast of a trumpet sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. They could not bear the command, even if a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned, so terrible was the sight. Moses said: "I am full of fear and trembling." Add to all these, the killing or 3,000 men forced to be killed by beloved relatives and friends who loved each other.

The inauguration of Grace and the New and Eternal Covenant was very different: **You have come to Mount Zion, spiritual, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, to the sprinkled blood.**

12. Consider also Paul's allegory on the meaning of the two women of Abraham, (the whole story is in Genesis chapter 16, continues in Genesis 18:1-15, and ends in Genesis 21:1-21). In this story God promises a son to Abraham and Sarah his wife. As the years passed and no child was born, Sarah and Abraham decided to no longer wait for God's promise and to have a child in another way. Sara asked

Abraham to impregnate her slave Hagar; they adopted the child born of her and named him Ishmael. But God did not like this, and told him that Ismael was not the one who would inherit him, but the son of Sarah, his real wife. Sarah finally had the promised son Isaac, but Hagar and her son Ishmael despised Isaac. So Sarah became angry and kicked the slave Hagar and her son Ishmael out of the house. Paul says that this story has a prophetic spiritual meaning. These two women represent the two covenants: the slave Hagar represents the Law of Moses that produces slaves, and Sarah represents grace of God that produces free children. The two could not live together and Hagar and Ishmael had to be cast out of the house. This is a sad story, but it's what happened. Paul uses this analogy to show that we cannot live with two wives: the law and grace. As Hagar had to be cast out from the house, we should also do the same with the law when it wants to rule in the Church. If the Law of Moses wants to dominate the Church, then it must be cast out!

Galatians 4:21-31 New American Standard Bible **21** Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. **23** But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. **24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants:** one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who **are to be slaves**; she is Hagar. **25** Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the **present Jerusalem**, for **she is in slavery with her children**. **26** But the **Jerusalem above** is free; she is our mother. **27** For it is written, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; ^[1]For more numerous are the children of the desolate ^[2]Than of the one who has a husband." **28** And **you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise**. **29** But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also. **30** But what does the Scripture say? **"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, ^[3]For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."** **31** **So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.**

The “*present Jerusalem*” represents the people of Israel, the “*Jerusalem from above*” is the Church of Christ Revelation 21:2-4, 10. In other words, **we are not children of the Law, but of grace.** Paul says we cannot live with both Romans 7:2-6.

13. Please, do not to preach these things next Sunday at your church. Remember this is solid food and is not for children who are use to milk. I write this just to make you **think and identify the true character of God.** God has always been a God of grace. He planned and executed the covenant of grace before the world was created Titus 1:2. You should not preach these things, but you can study it with your leaders, because leaders should know more than the led, and the teacher know more than his disciples. I speak to teachers writing to help you to become more inquisitive and investigate the Scriptures that perhaps you never previously paid attention to. Since the Bible is a phenomenal book and contains many mysteries that God wants to reveal to those “*who love Him*” we are called to unveil these things. Besides it is God’s will that we enter into His mysteries:

1 Corinthians 2:6-9 New American Standard Bible **6** Yet we do speak wisdom among **those who are mature**; a wisdom, however, **not of this age nor of the rulers of this age**, who are passing away; **7** but **we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery**, the hidden *wisdom* which **God predestined before the ages to our glory**; **8** *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; **9** but just as it is written, “Things which **eye has not seen and ear has not heard**, **And which have not entered the heart of man**, **All that God has prepared for those who love Him.**”

Deuteronomy 29:29 New International Version (NIV) **29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but **the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever**, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Acts 17:11 New Living Translation (NLT) **11** And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.

2 Timothy 3:16 New Living Translation (NLT) **16** All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

So never be afraid to investigate and penetrate the mystery of the Scriptures. Actually, mystery is what we do not know yet. Don't you get tired of "**always the same**"? We have to search the Scriptures not ignore them. What inspires me to examine these issues is to know more about the true and eternal nature and Character of God, who he was, is, and will be. What this thesis does is to teach me that God was, is and always will be the same God. Let's not overlook the Biblical passages that we do not understand; let us investigate them in prayer to learn something we don't already know. Sure, some things will perhaps only be understood in heaven but the revealed things are for us to understand now. There are many mysteries in the Scriptures that **are explained in the Scriptures.**

All the terrible and strange things that happen on earth we believe are allowed by God. But do not forget that Satan runs this world because he is the god of this world. Jesus said Satan is the prince of this world John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, and John also says that ***"the whole world is under the power of the evil one"*** 1 John 5:19. But thank God that ***"greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world"*** 1 John 4:4. If Jesus is greater than who is in the world and He is in us, then most of the sad things happen outside in the world and come from Satan, but because Christ lives within us we receive comfort, encouragement and hope from inside

ourselves, where Christ lives. *"He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world"*. He said:

John 4:14 Whoever **drinks the water I shall give him shall never thirst**; Indeed, the water I give him **will become in him a well of water springing up** into everlasting life.

John 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture says, **out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water**.

Do not expect much from the outside, from the world. *"Christ in you is the hope of glory"* Colossians 1:27. We know who is out there Ephesians 6:12-13.

F. THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

1. As taking the sacrament of communion in an unworthily manner can be a cause for **discipline**, I want to include a little bit of it in my thesis. I believe that Communion is something we usually do in a hurry. I will soon devote a whole chapter to the Lord's Supper thesis, but while we wait think on this:

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 New American Standard Bible **27** Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy** manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** But a man **must examine himself**, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks, **eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly**. **30** For this reason many among you are **weak and sick, and a number sleep**. **31** But if we **judged ourselves rightly**, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged, **we are disciplined by the Lord** so that **we will not be condemned** along with the world.

This sacrament is a very important and powerful sacrament, we **remember, celebrate and renew the greatest happening in history**, the **eternal covenant of grace**, created in eternity and sealed with the blood of Jesus in

Jerusalem. I think that many of our churches do not give the importance, if any, to the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which transformed world history. Our Holy Communion in our Evangelical churches is sometimes done in a hurry, at the end of the service as an appendix, once a month, no time is provided for meditation, self-examination, confession, reconciliation, and ministering spiritual, social and physical health, resolving unsolved problems with ourselves, with God and with others. *"But a man **must examine himself**, and **in so doing** he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup"* This hardly is emphasized, we usually only highlight that the sacrament is something symbolic and done in remembrance and..., nothing else.

However, according to St. Paul it is much more than that, because taking it in an unworthily way does much damage to the community, *"more harm than good"* 1 Corinthians 11:17. *We "sin against the body and blood of the Lord"* 1 Corinthians 11:27, *we eat "judgment and drink for ourselves"* 1 Corinthians 11:29 *thoughtlessly taken produces "weakness, illness and premature death"* 1 Corinthians 11:30. It should not be taken until *"divisions"* and gossip are treated 1 Corinthians 11:18 thus the sacrament of Communion or Eucharist should be spiritually, emotionally and even physically wholesome because we would avoid that *"many of you get sick and weak, and some die prematurely."*

2. The pastor and church leaders must come together in prayer before scheduling communion and examine the spiritual state of the Church or the relationship of the staff and members of the Church with God, the social status or the relationship of believers with each other and their needs; physical needs, sickness, etc., and decide on this basis what elements should be included in the liturgy of communion the next time; what to preach, do, prayers, hymns and choruses to sing, what testimonies give and how to divide the time to make it

all lead to reconciliation with God, reconciliation and support among brothers and sisters, ministering to the sick and helping the poor,

Acts 4:32-35 New American Standard Bible **32** And the congregation of those who believed **were of one heart and soul**; and **not one of them** claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but **all things were common property** to them. **33** And with **great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**, and **abundant grace was upon them all**. **34** For **there was not a needy person among them**, for all who were owners of land or houses **would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales** **35 and lay them at the apostles' feet**, and they **would be distributed to each as any had need**.

While it is true that selling their possessions was based on their belief of Jesus' soon return at any time and as Jesus second coming was delayed, the Church of Jerusalem became impoverished and Gentiles had to send economic aid ^{1 Corinthians 16:1-3, Romans 15:25-27,} it is also true that although the methodology may have been faulty, their motivation **was not** wrong. Today we need to create a proper methodology to achieve the eradication of poverty in our congregations.

3. Each Communion time should be a spiritual, social and physical health renewal of the Church. We should make more time to examine and resolve before the Lord's Supper all internal conflicts of every believer with himself, conflicts within the family, with friends, with siblings, with pastors, with enemies, with colleagues and school mates. It should be time for confession to God and others and even to our physical body if not nourished and exercised as needed and take time to minister forgiveness ^{John 21:22-23.} If someone is offended with us we should fix it on the spot, it is urgent ^{Matthew 5:23-25} "But if we judged ourselves well, the Lord **would not punish**" ^{1 Corinthians 11:31.}

Matthew 5:22-25 New American Standard Bible **22** But I say to you that **everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court**; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. **23** Therefore **if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.** **25** Make friends **quickly** with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

1 John 1:8-9 New American Standard Bible **8** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Why go on carrying all those conflicts and burdens when we have the cure so handy? It is just repentance and confession. Historical churches give more attention to the Eucharist. The Roman Catholic Church requires confession before Communion. The Lutheran and Episcopal Churches do not do communion in a hurry. In the Evangelical Churches confession is not emphasized. Historic churches and the Brethren churches in Argentina, gave much importance to the sacrament of Communion as the center of the Sunday liturgy. The best Holy Suppers I remember were those of the Italian Church when I was young. The whole service focused and engaged in the Lord's Supper and time was given to assure that all these things were met, the Communion service lasted as much as four hours and was done once a year with a day of fasting and prayer. It was like a new beginning for every believer and the congregation. There all accounts were settled and a new page for the life of the Church started. The sacrament of Communion was a very important sacrament.

James 5:16 New American Standard Bible **16** Therefore, **confess your sins to one another**, and pray for one another **so that you may be healed**. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

4. The Lord's Supper was given to us to update our accounts with God, with ourselves and with others, and for us to be physically healed. It is a renewal of our conversion and new birth. Actually we “proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes”
1 Corinthians 11:26. **We remember that on that cross we died also, therefore, this we also celebrate**. The sacrament is therapeutic for our conscience, emotions and physical bodies. Actually, what are we remembering? Jesus’ death and ours? What he did for us and with us! Well then, let's take time to renew anything that becomes old and have time to let Him minister to us in all the areas of His passion:

Isaiah 53:4-6 Living Bible **4** Yet it was our grief he bore, our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, for his *own* sins! **5** But **he was wounded and bruised for our sins**. He was **beaten that we might have peace**; he was lashed—and **we were healed!** **6** *We*—every one of us—have strayed away like sheep! *We*, who left God's paths to follow our own. Yet **God laid on him the guilt and sins of every one of us!**

All these solutions must be revitalized in every Communion service. We should meditate on the purpose of Communion and the changes and the extra time needed in the liturgy of the Eucharist to minister reconciliation between the members of the Body of Christ, the **solution** of **social, racial, economic** differences, etc., and ministering **to the sick**, including **confession** to each other and prayer to be "**healed**".

CONCLUSION:

Let us meditate on this lesson and adjust our attitude toward the promises of grace including self-forgiveness, forgiving others, transformation, desire to please God and ability to do so, eternal life with Him and discipline on earth.

Seeing the severity of discipline in both the Old Testament and the New, we will not use the same violent methods of those times. We need to seek acceptable discipline today to heal the wounds of the body of Christ in a tender, loving and real way. Resentments must disappear, reconcile enmities should be the order of the day, debts are to be paid, our offenders forgiven, poverty in the body of Christ ended, return and restore the stolen, and that through confession and prayer for each other, heal the sick. New Covenant is to believe that **we can do all this through Christ** who gives us the strength.

Discipline is not attractive, that's why most preachers and teachers avoid it. But **it is very clear in our Holy Book**. I do not think we need today to "deliver to Satan" or condemn believers to death but instead use the methodology of grace that Jesus used with Peter after his denial. How did He discipline him? He asked him three times, "*Simon, son of John, do you love me?*" John 21: 15-19.

Grace is not an allowance to disobey and sin. It is the ability that God gives us to want to obey and not to sin. The good works of the elect are works of grace. God has prepared those good works in advance for us, put them in our way so when we find them, we do them Ephesians 2:10. When our conscience senses the opportunity to do one of these good works, grace will encourage us to want to do them and provide the ability to do them Philippians 2:13. The time of the Eucharist would be the opportunity to express the needs of the brethren, verified by the deacons of the church, and as we raise offerings for many things, make a plan to **exterminate poverty** at least among the members of our congregation providing scholarships for young people of poor families to study, and stop prolonging their poverty into the next generation of the family. Also ensure that the adults who could not get a diploma in their field and have only minimum wage jobs that they get a degree in

their chosen field. All professionals of the congregation should join and create a plan for the eradication of poverty in their congregation, not like as the government does, but as a father does with his children, watching and mentoring.

Discipline among the elect. God disciplines those he loves as parents discipline their children, but remember, they never cease being our children and believers never lose their salvation. We discipline our children because we love them and want the best for them in their adult life. God uses Satan to discipline His children. Satan is like the rod with which God disciplines us. Repentance, confession, reparation and restitution maintain the health of the Church and avoid the disciplines. Thank you very much!