

COMFORT IN THEOLOGY

Comfort in Theology

COMFORT IN THEOLOGY
FOR THOSE WHO SEE THE
CULMINATION OF THEIR
LIFE APPROACHING



By
Charles R. Chesnutt, Sr.

For God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son,
That whosoever believes in Him should
Not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

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“Buy the Truth and sell it not.”

Proverbs 23:23

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About the Author and this Book

The author is a bankruptcy attorney in Dallas, Texas, where he has resided since 1979. He is married and the father of four. After graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1983, he returned to the practice of law, not having received God's call to a different ministry. He is an ardent student of scripture and has been so since completing seminary. He is an evangelist and an author. He publishes his works without charge on BIBLEBOOKS.CO (Proverbs 23:23) and publishes a website that argues for creation ex nihilo from the perspective of design in nature. That website is located at CREATIONDESIGN.ORG.



This work was written after the author discovered the reassurance and peace that comes from the understanding of the grand continuity of scripture as it relates to the afterlife. The current evangelical teaching of the afterlife, if any, is disabled by the uncertainty created by the often repeated error, “Death in the Bible means separation.” This error has effectively defined death into non-existence: no one ever really dies! Everybody lives forever in either heaven or hell.

The belief the Bible does not refer to actual death is a fog of theological error that creates nothing but uncertainty for those whose lifetimes are closing. True peace for those of us who can see the finish does not lie in the mistaken belief that no one ever dies. Death does not change just because the word is in the Bible. Death in the Bible is indeed

death—real, actual, cold hard death. Reassurance lies in the fact that there are two of them. There are two deaths but Christians die only one.

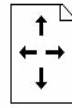
This work would not have been possible without the help and unwaivering encouragement of my wife, Mary Chesnutt.

Charles Chesnutt
Dallas, Texas 2017

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Chapter 1

Comfort in Theology

THEOLOGY IS MORE COMFORTING WHEN IT IS
CONSISTENT

Christians who are facing the end of life can find significant comfort in consistent theology. But theology that is disconnected from reality and the rest of scripture is far less convincing.

Bible verses that have been disconnected from the body of consistent truth are like bricks strewn on the ground at a work-site. They are independent and not part of the structure itself. They demand credibility because they are part of God's Word, but for no other reason.

Although the fact that they are part of His Word is sufficient reason to believe them, scripture passages that have been isolated are not facially coherent. God's Truth is a tapestry that presents a consistent whole and when we can see where each scripture fits, it is far more compelling and understandable. When isolated threads become interwoven into the entire tapestry of scripture, they take on a credibility and faith that is massive in comparison.

Tragically, the great promise of Christ found in John 11:25 is one of those isolated threads.

“He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

When the Messiah spoke these words He was only minutes away from raising Lazarus from the dead. So His intent is clear. He was quite literally teaching that if we believe in Him we will live even though we die.

But we *really do die*. We can remind ourselves that God said that we will live even though we die and that is supposed to settle the question. But when relentless death stands leering at our bedside where shall we go for assurance?

The conflict between scripture and observable reality is present at every funeral. The pastor or the priest solemnly announces to the congregation that the corpse or the ashes in the little box are the remains of someone who is “not really dead.”

How does Christ’s statement fit into what we are actually seeing? How can it be true that “everyone who believes in Me [Christ] will never die” when, in fact, we most certainly do die?

The explanation offered by the evangelical church of today less than adequate. The conventional explanation is simply that we don’t really die, because death in the Bible is not really death at all. Death in the Bible is only separation from God. So, when Christ said that we will live even though we die He meant that we will never be separated from God.

Since death is only being “separated from God,” no one ever really dies at all. Everybody goes to either heaven or hell and lives forever in peace or in torment. So death just looks like death but it’s only separation from God.

That is ridiculous. Death is death and it doesn't matter whether it occurs in the Bible or outside of the Bible. The word means what it means. There is nothing in the Bible that says death does not mean real death.

In fact, one look at a Greek or Hebrew dictionary shows that death in the Bible is death plain and simple; it is no different from the death anywhere. The meaning of the word does not change just because it is used in the Bible.

The tragedy of separation-from-God error is that it deprives those who are facing real death from the comfort of consistent scripture. And if there were ever a time when consistent, credible theology is needed it is when we face our own death. But there, when comfort is most needed, all that conventional evangelicalism has to offer is a myth, "You are not really going to die because death in the Bible is only separation from God and you won't be separated because you have trusted in Christ." This is cold comfort when one stares his own death directly in the face.

So, do Christians really die when they die? Of course they do. In fact the Bible teaches that everyone must die.¹ Even Jesus Christ died.

But does that mean that Christ was wrong when He said that we would never die?

No. Christ was not wrong about anything.

So, if Christians actually do die and Christ said that they don't die, who is right? Both statements cannot be true.

Both statements are true. How?

1 Hebrews 9:27

Both statements are true because there are *two* deaths. The first death is the death of the body and the second death is the death of the soul. When Christ said that He gave us eternal life, He did not mean that He gave our bodies eternal life. He meant that He gave our souls eternal life.

Scripture teaches that the first death is “appointed” to all men. Everyone has to die the first death:

“It is appointed for men [all men] to die once...”²

So we should expect our body to die, just like everyone else.

But there is a second death that occurs after our body dies and that is the reason why Hebrews 9:27 specifies that it is appointed to all men to die *once*. All men will die once but not all men will die twice.

The second death is not for everybody. It is only for the unredeemed. It happens for all of the unredeemed following the final judgment. The second death is the final enactment of the warning given by Paul when he said “the wages of sin is death.”³

The second death occurs at the end of time when the unredeemed of mankind are all judged and they die in the “second death.”⁴ The entire Bible is a warning that sin kills and this is the death of which it speaks.

2 Hebrews 9:27

3 Romans 6:3

4 See Revelation 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murders and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Ezekiel stated it in crystal clear terms, “The soul that sins shall die.”⁵ There are 50 scriptures that repeatedly warn us that sin kills.

Why doesn’t evangelical theology teach about the second death? Because the second death does not fit well with the separation from God belief and because current evangelical theology teaches that no one ever actually dies. Everybody goes to either heaven or hell forever. They don’t die; they just “pass on” to either heaven or hell. Thus, word for death in the Bible has been re-defined to mean “separation from God” and no one ever really dies.

Why is it necessary to re-define the word for death to mean separation from God? Because if the word for death in the Bible means real death, then the souls of all of the unredeemed would actually die in the second death. And if they died in the second death, they could not be tormented forever in hell because a dead body or dead soul cannot be tormented. The belief that unbelievers will be tormented forever is very important to many evangelicals. So death in the Bible has to mean something other than real death.

But what does scripture say?

We know that we have a soul because scripture teaches that God has given us a soul:

“Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine.”^{6†}

And we know that the soul that sins will die:

5 Ezekiel 18:4

6 Ezekiel 18:4 † This verse shows that the reference to souls is not a reference to people, but to the souls of people.

The soul who sins will die.^{7†}

We know that everybody dies the first death:

Hebrews 9:27 “It is appointed for men [all men] to die once...”⁸

And we can see from the Parable of Lazarus that the soul does not die in the first death. The body of Lazarus and the body of the rich man died, but their souls did not. The soul of the rich man was tormented in hell⁹ because all unredeemed souls go to hell until the final judgment,¹⁰ after which hell itself is cast into the lake of fire.¹¹

The body dies because it wears out. The soul dies because it sins.

But that is where Jesus Christ comes in. He paid for our sins by bearing them on the cross.

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...”¹²

In doing so, He became sin for us, so that we could be righteous (without sin).

7 Ezekiel 18:4 † This verse refers to the soul as a soul, not as a physical person.

8 Hebrews 9:27 “It is appointed for men [all men] to die once...”

9 See the Parable of Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31

10 Revelation 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murders and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

11 Revelation 20:14 “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

12 First Peter 2:24

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”¹³

That’s why Jesus Christ is so important. He died in our place. He paid our penalty (death) for us and in doing so made us righteous and without sin in God’s sight. That means that we will not die in the second death.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.”¹⁴

Instead, He gives us eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”¹⁵

It is the gift of God.

Through grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God.¹⁶

To obtain it, all you have to do is sincerely decide to come to Christ trusting in Him and Him alone for the gift.

13 Second Corinthians 5:21

14 Revelation 2:11 † Being victorious means yielding to the commands of Christ (cf. John 14:21,23). This results in the presence of Christ within, which is the hallmark of salvation (Second Corinthians 13:5).

15 John 3:16

16 Ephesians 2:8,9

And the Spirit and the bride [the church] say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

The condemnation (the second death) is based upon one’s choice to receive or to reject Christ.

“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”¹⁷

So when Christ said that we would live even though we die, He was not saying that our bodies will never die, nor was He saying that death in the Bible is not really death. He was saying that when our body dies, it is only our body that dies, not our soul. The Christian’s soul will survive the first death and it will not die in the second death. It will live forever because Christ has given us eternal life.¹⁸ And later it will be reunited with a resurrected body,¹⁹ just like Jesus had a resurrected body.

17 John 3:17

18 First John 5:11 “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”

19 Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

Therefore, the scriptural message to Christians who are facing their own death is this: Don't delude yourself. Your body will die because all bodies die; they all wear out at one time or another.²⁰ But take comfort because there are two deaths, not just one. And you will die only the first one. You, the real you, your soul, will never die because it has been given eternal life.²¹ Your body does not have eternal life. Your soul does and later you will receive a resurrected body.²²

Death for the Christian is like the woman who comes in from the cold. She is tired. She walks through her house and drops her arms to her side and lets an old coat slip from her shoulders to the floor. But she, the real she, walks on and life for her has just begun.

20 Hebrews 9:27 "...it is appointed for men [all men] to die once..."

21 John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish [die] but have eternal life."

22 Revelation 20:6 "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

That's what Christ was talking about when He said "He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies."^{23†}



23 John 11:25. † There is no scripture in the Bible that teaches that any entity will suffer eternal torment other than Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet (Revelation 20:10); the words "eternal torment" are not used anywhere else in scripture. The only scriptures that are used to support eternal torment are those scriptures that are simply broad enough to mean either death or eternal torment. Every single scripture that speaks directly to the ultimate punishment for sin says that the punishment is death. Hence death must be re-defined to accommodate eternal torment because one cannot torment a dead body—or a dead soul. Specifically, see Revelation 21:8, the final end of unbelievers is "the second death;" Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death;" Ezekiel 18:4 "The soul who sins will die." The Bible contains 50 scriptures that specifically teach that sin causes death and Greek dictionaries define the Greek word that is translated "death" as death plain and simple. The doctrine of eternal torment is an error that effects numerous good doctrines and the doctrine of the second death is one of them. See the author's *Fate of Unbelievers*.

Chapter 2

Believe in God

BUT HOW?

Believing in God can be difficult, especially if you just don't. So, for those of us who just don't, but still wonder, let us ask the telling question. If God is God, why is He silent?

Let's face reality. If God is really there, why can't we see Him? Is there really some huge invisible God out there who never speaks and never makes Himself known? Can He not speak? Is He hiding Himself?

What does the Bible say about this. Does the Bible say that God is hiding Himself?

Yes, it does.

Does that mean that He makes Himself known to some people but not others?

Yes, it does.

Let's start from where Jesus says that God hides Himself. Jesus makes this statement in what is perhaps the earliest question and answer session in history.

Jesus had been teaching about a spiritual realm called The Kingdom of God. That night, after Jesus taught these things, a man named Nicodemus came to him and asked Him about it.

This is what Jesus said:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”^{1†}

Jesus is saying that there is a Kingdom of God, but not everyone can see it.² It is a spiritual reality that is superimposed on the material world.³ That is the reason why not everyone can see it. In order to see the Kingdom of God we have to be born again.

So, we might as well give up trying to perceive or experience this spiritual reality by any means other than being born again.

Exactly what is being born again? Nicodemus asks Him that question:

“How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb can he?”⁴

Jesus answers and says that the Kingdom of God is spiritual, not physical:

1. John 3:3 † Christians have been preaching and singing about knowing God in this life for centuries. For instance, see *Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee*, a hymn by Bernard de Clairvaux, 1091-1153 A.D., *Worship and Service Hymnal* (Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream IL, 2001), verse 4, “But what of those who find [find Christ]? Ah! This nor tongue nor pen can show, The love of Jesus, what it is. None but His loved ones know”

2 Also see Luke 17:20 “The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ ...”

3 John 4:24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

4. John 3:4

“...Unless one is born of water [his mother’s womb] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”⁵

Jesus was teaching about something that is invisible; He was teaching about spiritual things, not physical things. The next question, of course, is “How can there be a spiritual reality that we cannot perceive?” Jesus answers this question before Nicodemus can ask it.

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”⁶

Jesus is saying that we have to experience it to either see it or believe it. Christianity is experiencing the Kingdom of God. Being born again is like feeling the wind blowing. We know that the wind is real because we can hear it and feel it; but it is invisible. Jesus is telling us that we can experience the Kingdom of God just as certainly as we can feel the wind blowing.

The next question is how can we experience this Kingdom of God? Jesus knows that this is Nicodemus’ next question and He answers it before Nicodemus can ask it:

5. John 3:5. Here, Jesus specifies that one must be born of water because the right to be born again extends only to humans and not any other created being, such as angels.

6. John 3:7,8

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [trusts] in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”⁷

Jesus is saying that those who believe in Him will gain entrance to this Kingdom and will be given the gift of eternal life. But He is saying something else as well. The word believe may be better translated as “trust.”

He is saying that He (Jesus) will be like the serpent in the wilderness. Jesus is saying that we should trust in Him just like the Jews trusted in the serpent in the wilderness.

What is the serpent in the wilderness?

After the Jews had escaped Pharaoh, they were in the desert and they had encountered poisonous snakes that bit them (very much like sin bites us today). But, God provided a cure, but the cure was of a spiritual nature and had nothing to do with the snakebites themselves. The cure was simple. Moses made a bronze statute of a snake and raised it up on a pole. If someone was bitten, all he had to do was to go and look at the snake and he was healed.⁸ So people who believed enough to go and look at the serpent were healed. Those who did not even have enough faith to try were never healed; they died. That was the test that God imposed.

7. John 3:14-16

8 Numbers 21

Very little faith or trust was required. All they had to do was look. God was separating those who would not even try from those who did.

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that He will be like the serpent in the wilderness. He was saying that He will be lifted up on the cross in the same way that the snake was lifted up on the pole. Jesus will be the cure for sin in the same way the snake was the cure for the snakebites. All we have to do is look to the cross and we will be healed. But, just like with the Hebrews, some people won't even bother to try. God is separating those who will not even try from those who do.

But why did Jesus compare himself to a serpent when the serpent represents sin in the Bible? Because, you see, in order to save us from our sins, Jesus became sin for us.⁹

Ultimately, however, we come back to the same question. How can we believe in something that we have neither seen nor experienced? The key is in the word "believe." Believe means to trust. That is all. It does not mean to know. Knowing God comes as a result of yielding after trusting.

But trust Him for what? Trust that through him all of our sins have been totally forgiven. When we do this, we avail ourselves of benefit of the cross. When Christ died on the cross he paid for the sins of the world so that we can be completely forgiven.¹⁰ We obtain this forgiveness when we trust in Christ.

9. Second Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

10. Romans 5:8 "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us."

How much real faith does one need to trust in Christ? Just enough to trust sincerely in Christ even without being sure. Knowing is not necessary.

We exercise the same kind of faith when we put our lives into the hands of someone we do not know every time we get on an airplane or trust in a surgeon. Trusting in Christ is just as easy. Some people trust in Him and some do not, but the invitation is open to all.¹¹

Trusting in Christ may be a leap of faith for some. But it is never a leap of certainty for any because certainty is not faith and it is faith that is required.¹² The question is how much faith is necessary. The answer is just enough to try—but try sincerely.

Trusting in Christ is simple and free because it is a gift.¹³ Trusting in Christ may be done through prayer. For instance, one may pray “God, I will trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all my sin.” That is what faith is. It is trusting even though we are not certain. Certainty comes with knowing God and that comes later.

Some do not experience the Kingdom of God after trusting in Christ. Why not? Some people trust in Christ and just kind of hope that it will all work out in the end and never really know. Why is this? Because knowing God is a two-step process.

11. Revelation 22:17 “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

12. Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God...”

13. Ephesians 2:8,9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God.”

Knowing God

The first step to knowing God is to obtain forgiveness for all sin because it is sin that separates us from God. That is Christ's free gift with no strings attached.

But the second step is different. The second step is where Christ makes Himself known to *you*. The second step is establishing a personal experiential relationship with Jesus Christ. That's where the term "knowing God" or "knowing Christ" comes from. It is not theory. It is real. But, like all relationships, it takes two and God does not relate to just anyone. So, what is God looking for in us before He discloses Himself to us?

He is looking for the same thing that we look for: sincerity. He is looking for heart.

God is indeed God and as such He is fully aware of our true intentions. We can't hide anything from God. So, real honesty is really important. A relationship with God is all about honest intent followed by action.

What is your intention? Do you intend to take what you can from Him and go your way, or do you want to establish a relationship?

The gift of forgiveness is free and you can have it just for the asking. And you can take this gift and go your way if you wish. But that is like being given a check for a million dollars and never cashing it. Actually knowing God is an experience that words cannot describe.¹⁴

14 Philippians 3:8 "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"

A relationship with God is like any other relationship: you have to stick around and relate. Otherwise there is no relationship. It always takes two because that's what relationships are. They are always two-sided.

How do we relate to God? We establish a relationship with God in the same way that we establish a relationship with a friend¹⁵ and one of the most important things in a friendly relationship is mutual respect. Each one respects the other and accepts the other for who they are. We must respect God for who He is. But what God is is, well, God.

We express respect for who God is by recognizing that He is indeed God and because He is God we yield our will to His. That means that we obey Him because His word is not just law; it is Truth.¹⁶ To respect God means to give to Him all that He deserves and He deserves our worship. If we want to know Him, we must worship Him in spirit and in Truth.¹⁷ From God's perspective, He respects us because He has made us in His image¹⁸ and He can relate to us because in Christ we have been cleansed from all sin.¹⁹ Its a relationship; not a religion.

Knowing God is everything of eternal value:

15 John 15:15 "... I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

16 John 17:17 "Thy word is Truth." John 14:6 "I am the way, the Truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

17 John 4:24 "God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

18 Genesis 1:27 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

19 John 1:7 "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin..."

“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him...”²⁰

“He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature...”²¹

Knowing God *in this life* is magnificence beyond description. Nothing can compare to knowing Him.²² If you miss it, you have missed everything. Knowing God has to be experienced to be either understood or believed. Knowing God is what eternal life *is*.

“This is eternal life that you might know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.”²³

So how can you really know Him? Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself [make Myself known] to him.”²⁴

Jesus is saying that in order to know Him, we must have His commandments and keep them. So, first we have to know what His commandments are. They are written in

20 Second Peter 1:3

21 Second Peter 1:4

22 Philippians 3:8

23 John 17:3

24 John 14:21

the New Testament (the Bible). Most of us know them already; Jesus is telling us not to sin. If anyone has a question about whether something is a sin, just look in the Bible.

But does that mean that we have to be sinless before Christ will make Himself known to us? No, because we are not dealing with a formula. We are dealing with a relationship. This is neither a ritual nor a contract; it is a relationship. It is a spiritual love affair,²⁵ and as with any honest relationship the key is “heart” backed up with commitment and actions.

Our entire Christian life is a progression toward sinlessness; God made us and set it up that way. He is fully aware of who we are, where we are and what we can do and His love for us is not measured by our performance.²⁶ It is measured by heart. God is very forgiving,²⁷ but we must have heart (sincerity) and express our true heart by our choices.

Because of this, knowing God can occur immediately. It depends on the depth of our commitment.

When we sincerely come to Christ and we yield to Him *totally*, two things happen. First, our sins are forgiven and we receive the gift of eternal life (although we may not feel it). At that point in time Jesus Christ becomes sin for us so that we may, in Him, be fully righteous.²⁸ And at that point, we have become effectively sinless and fully acceptable to God and open to a relationship. But what is our intent for the future? Are we yielded to Him? Do we *really*

25 First John 4:8 “...God is love.”

26 First Corinthians 13 describes God’s love for you.

27 First John 1:9

28 Second Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

see Him as God? Certainly, at this point we are still in the midst of a leap of faith and perhaps don't really know that is going to happen, if anything. But what is our true intent? If God really does disclose Himself to us do we really intend to relate to Him as our God in total yieldedness or do we intend to take His gift and walk?

True intent is everything here because God sees and judges the heart²⁹ and He gives to those according to their heart.³⁰ Indeed the intents of the heart become clear to us just from reading scripture.³¹

The sum of it is that God is God and He will relate to us exactly the we choose. We decide. Do we fully surrender or not? The extent that He discloses Himself to us depends on the extent of our surrender. It is a love affair, except you can't fool Him. You can't fake heart. You have to mean it when you yield to Him.

Just like us, God is not interested in relating to anyone who does not want to relate to Him. Love is a relationship and knowing God is an experiential spiritual relationship with Him.

29 First Samuel 16:7 "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

30 Jeremiah 17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

31 Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Look how often the word love is used in this very crucial statement by Christ:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father and I will love him, and will disclose [make Myself known] to him.”³²

To God, relationships are everything. And to us as well. Nothing is more important in life than relationships. The tragic person who does not recognize this truth will eventually find it to be true one way or another.

God’s love for us is described in detail in First Corinthians 13. First John 4:8 tells us that the specific kind of unconditional love described in First Corinthians 13 is what God actually *is*. God is a God of relationships because that is what love is. He is so much a God of relationships that He is a relationship (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

So knowing God is based upon becoming sinless by simply trusting in Christ and upon the true intent of the heart. So, hold nothing back. Yield to Him sincerely and unconditionally and God will disclose Himself to you in no uncertain terms. You don’t need one bit more belief or one bit more faith than what is necessary just to do that.

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”³³

32 John 14:21

33 John 14:23

On the other hand, when we sin, we show that we do not love God and His presence may depart:

“He who does not love Me does not keep My words...”³⁴

If anyone trusts in Jesus Christ, his sins are forgiven and the door is open. If God remains silent, it is because we are not sincere about yielding to Him. God knows it and He is not going to stick around to watch us fake it.

Christ is the door,³⁵ but we must walk through it.

“Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”³⁶



34 John 14:23

35 John 10:9 “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

36. Ephesians 5:14