

God of Wrath, God of Love

Many Christians believe that God is a “testing God.” They feel that He places painful obstacles and challenges into our lives that we may then “prove ourselves” to Him. They are certain that He punishes us when we sin. They feel that God, from time to time, gets fed up with Mankind and sends wrathful “lessons” upon us to “encourage us” to “be better.” To them, sometimes God is an angry, stern Father. I will admit, when read literally, evidence for this theory seemingly abounds in the Hebrew Bible’s “Old Testament” ...

And yet the New Testament clearly and repeatedly states that God is both all-Loving (“God is Love, and those who abide in Love abide in God, and God abides in them.” ~ 1 John 4:16) and all-Forgiving (“I desire Mercy, not sacrifice.” ~ Matthew 9:13). This is most evident in the vast majority of the Teachings of Jesus Christ ...

The New Covenant transcends the Old

And so how can we reconcile this readily apparent (and very important) contradiction? The easiest way to do so is found within the verses of the Bible itself. The New Testament makes it clear that, wherever there is an apparent contradiction between the two Covenants (as in the case at hand, with the Old Testament identifying God as wrathful and the New Testament billing Him as all-Loving), **the New Covenant always takes precedence** (“There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier Commandment because it was weak and ineffectual ... There is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better Hope, through which we approach God ... [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree is the mediator of the better covenant ... For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one ... *In speaking of a ‘new Covenant’, he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.*” ~ Hebrews 7:18-22 & Hebrews 8:6-13) ...

Of course, some may argue that Jesus himself supported Moses’ Law (“Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill.” ~ Matthew 5:17). This is true, though the Bible goes on at length to explain that, while Jesus did affirm the validity of the Old Testament Law, he also came to radically modify the way we are to *fulfill* that Law (“For if there was Glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of liberation abound in Glory! ... Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only ‘in Christ’ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:9-15). In essence, Jesus replaced the 10 negative “Thou shalt not” Commandments of Moses with 2 “Thou shall” Commandments of God (“For in [Jesus] every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes’. For this reason it is through him that we say ‘Amen’ to the Glory of God.” ~ 2 Corinthians 1:19-20). In this way, Jesus became the “end” of the older Law, even while he upheld its basic tenants (“Christ is the End of the Law.” ~ Romans 10:4 & “The Law indeed was given through Moses; Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ.” ~ John 1:17). Jesus came to bring us The Way; a practice of Love that would make the then stale Old Covenant effective and viable again in our everyday lives ...

And yet, for those who believe that the Old Testament’s “God of wrath” is still alive and well (despite the Scriptural references cited above), the problem still presents itself: without

believing in the simultaneous existence of two very different Gods, how can we reconcile these apparently contradictory beliefs – a God who is both all-Loving and yet wrathful; a God who cares for us regardless of what we do and yet regularly provokes us with pain so that we can then “prove ourselves” to Him? More importantly for Christians, how can we reconcile these two interpretations of God in a way that harmonizes with Jesus’ clear Commandment of unconditional Love? Fortunately, there is a Way – a Way found in the verses of the Bible itself!

Remembering the Nature of God

Initially, it is Important to remember that the Bible itself states that we cannot quantify God with any certainty. He and the magnitude of His ways will forever remain a Mystery to us (“The God who made the world and everything in it ... does not Live in shrines made by human hands, nor is He Served by human hands, as though He needed anything ... For **in Him we Live and move and have our Being** ... Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.” ~ Acts 17:24-29 & “O, the depth of the riches and Wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**” ~ Romans 11:33). This need not be a cause for concern, for this mysteriousness is what makes our faith in God not only necessary, but power-full (“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to Believe.” ~ John 20:29). Indeed, it is not for us to strive to “know” the exact nature of God, but rather it is our Mission to humble ourselves and simply follow His Commandment of unconditional Love (No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we Love one another, God lives in us and His Love is perfected in us. By this Love we know that we abide in Him and He in us.” ~ 1 John 4:12 & “Knowledge puffs up, but Love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but **anyone who Loves God is known by Him.**” ~ 1 Corinthians 8:1-2 & “Know the Love of Christ **that surpasses all knowledge.**” ~ Ephesians 3:19). Actually, it is *because* we cannot know God’s Will for certain that our actions, when faith-fully attempting to fulfill His Will, are powerful (“Due, then, to our faith, we act with great boldness.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:12) ...

God Resides Within You

And where are we to find our God? Many pray to a God that resides “on high”; far away from our mortal existence on Earth. These believers worship an external God that “looks down” upon us “from on high.” Indeed, there is Scriptural support for such a claim (“Where can I Go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your Presence? If I go up on the Heavens, you are there: if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.” ~ Psalm 139:7). I myself choose to see God in everything around me every day. I feel His presence in my Life. And yet, when the Bible speaks of worshipping God in relation to our Salvation, it invariably describes God as an *internal Presence* – a Guiding Power residing *inside* each and every one of us (“Know that I am in my Father **and you in me, and I in you.**” ~ John 14:20 & “Do you not Know that you are God’s Temple, and that **God’s Spirit dwells in You?**” ~ 1 Corinthians 3:16 & “Do you not realize that **Jesus Christ is in you?**” ~ 2 Corinthians 13:5). And so, God is in everything; both those entities outside our bodies as well as the Force of Spirit that resides within our hearts (“There is one body and one Spirit; ... **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**” ~ Ephesians 4:4-6) ...

God is all-Loving

More important than where God resides is the revelation of His Divine Nature; the essence of God's Character. Though God may rest within all that exists, it is not necessarily true that everything in existence accurately reflects God's Love. While remaining vague with regards to any specific attributes of God, the Bible makes it very clear that God is the embodiment of perfect Love ("Whoever Loves another Lives in the Light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling ... Beloved, let us Love one another, because Love is from God; **everyone who Loves is Born of God and Knows God** ... No one has ever seen God; **if we Love one another, God Lives in us**, and his Love is perfected in us ... **God is Love, and those who abide in Love abide in God, and God abides in them**" ~ 1 John 2:10 & 1 John 4:7-16). In addition, and more important with regards to this article, God is immune from all evil and therefore tempts none of us to be selfish ("God cannot be tempted by evil and He himself tempts no one." ~ James 1:13). He is not a God who effectuates pain, which causes dissension, but is rather a God of harmony ("For God is not a God of disorder but of Peace." ~ 1 Corinthians 14:33). In fact, God is not the source of our life's challenges at all, but rather is the source of the Love that enables us to give lovingly despite those difficulties ("Every generous act of Giving, with every perfect Gift, is from Above, coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." ~ James 1:17) ...

God is all-Forgiving

In addition to His loving nature, God is also the epitome of perfect, unconditional Forgiveness ("And even when you were dead in your trespasses, God made you alive together with him when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it all to the cross ..." ~ Colossians 2:12-13). This is supported by simple, God-given common sense. It is almost insulting to God to say that He intentionally created us as imperfect Beings* and yet still directly punishes any of us for the very mistakes this His own Act of Creation engendered ...

*There is no debate that 1] Love must be volitional to exist (no one can Love with a gun to his or her head; Love is by its very nature selfless -- given freely or given not at all), 2] our Salvation hinges upon our ability to Choose Love over fear (see [Matthew 5:48](#) & [1 John 4:18](#)), and 3] this Free Will makes us per se mistake-prone beings, apt to err while living "in the flesh" ...

More importantly for Christians, the Bible itself notes repeatedly that God is a God of Forgiveness, and that this Forgiveness is inclusive *for all human beings* regardless of their sins ("[God] is Kind to both the ungrateful and the sinful. Be merciful, **just as your Father is merciful**. Do not judge and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned. **Forgive** and you will be Forgiven." ~ Luke 6:36-37). We are commanded to be "perfect" with our Love by loving our enemies – just as God Loves and Forgives His enemies ("**He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the Good, and sends rain on the Righteous and on the unrighteous**. For if you Love only those who Love you, what reward do you have? ... Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." ~ Matthew 5:45-48 & "If a brother sins against me, how often should I forgive -- as many as seven times? Jesus said to him: [Forgive] not seven, but seventy times seven times." ~ Matthew 18:21-22). Even the Apostle Paul, who sometimes used harsh words to describe his own opinion as to the nature of God's Love, made it very clear that everyone who respects God by doing Good is accepted by God ("I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who respects Him and does what is Right is acceptable to Him." ~ Acts 10:34-35 & "**Live in Peace**, and the God of Love and Peace will be with You." ~ 2 Corinthians 13:11). This is reflected as well in the Luke's parable of the "Prodigal Son", where the Father (representing God) forgives his sinful son *before that son even has an opportunity to repent!* ("So he set off and went to his Father. **Yet while he was still far off**, his Father saw him and was filled with Compassion; [His Father then] ran out and put his arms around the son and kissed him." ~ Luke 15:20) ...

Indeed, how can a just and fair God demand less of himself than he demands of us? (“Be Kind to one another; tenderhearted, forgiving one another -- just as God has forgiven you.” ~ Ephesians 4:32). He tells us in the Bible that we must Love perfectly (see Matthew 5:48 et al) by forgiving even our enemies. He also tells us that all punishment is fear-based and that where there is fear, there cannot be perfection in Love (see 1 John 4:18). Thus, if the Bible is telling us the Truth, then God does not “guide” us with pain at all, much less punish us for our mistakes. Rather, when we experience pain in our lives, we can have complete faith that those difficulties were created by ourselves (as consequences of our previous selfish choices), and not sent to us as “lessons” or “discipline” by God (“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be Saved through him.” ~ John 3:17 & “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.” ~ John 5:22 & “**I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them**, for I came not to judge the world, but to Save the world.” ~ John 12:47) ...

God does not “test” us or cause us pain

God is not the entity that causes us pain, but rather the Essence of Love that gives us strength during all times of trial and tribulation (“But the Lord is Faithful; he will Strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.” ~ 2 Thessalonians 3:3). God wishes no one ill, but rather desires that all conscious beings choose the path of perfect Love’s Salvation (“So that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all godliness and Dignity. This is Right and Acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires everyone to be Saved** and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.” ~ 1 Timothy 2:2-4 & “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, **not wanting any to perish**, but rather all to come to repentance.” ~ 2 Peter 3:9). Yes, evil exists -- and yes, every one of us is continually inflicted with pain and confusion over the course of our lives. And yet, if we choose to turn our trials into challenges (instead of suffering self-centeredly), our hardships can empower us to Love perfectly and thereby attain the peace of Salvation (“Let those suffering in accordance with God’s Will entrust themselves to a loving Creator, and continue to Do Good.” ~ 1 Peter 4:19). One thing seems certain, God is not the force behind our tribulations, but rather the all-loving Power that supports us continually while we struggle with our life’s painful obstacles (“And after you have suffered, the God of all Grace, who has Called us to his Glory, will support, strengthen and establish You.” ~ 1 Peter 5:10) ...

Yes, hardships exist – there is no escaping them in this life. And yet this truth does not deny the fact that God is still forgiving of us and that He loves us anyway (“For judgment will be without Mercy to anyone who has shown no Mercy; **Mercy triumphs over judgment**.” ~ James 2:12-13 & “Blessed be the God and Father ... the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, who consoles us all in our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are themselves afflicted” ~ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). God is perfectly just and, because of His innate righteousness, it is clear to all believers that anything that is unjust (or in any way not perfectly loving) does not come from God (“His works are perfect and all His ways are Just.” ~ Deuteronomy 32:4). And because perfect Justice **is** all-loving Forgiveness (see above), it is also clear that God is not the entity inflicting us with our life’s “tests” – We inflict ourselves with them! (“Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven [by God] every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against [their own] Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven.” ~ Matthew 12:31 & “Happy is the one who listens to Me ... For whoever finds Me finds Life and obtains favor; but those who miss Me **injure themselves** ...” ~ Proverbs 8:34-36). No matter how many mistakes we make and no matter how many painful consequences we reap from those mistakes, God is always there, holding us close with Love – waiting patiently for us to make better choices (“But law came, with the result that trespasses multiplied; but even where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more ...” ~ Romans 5:20) ...

Our God-allowed pain enables our Salvation

Not only does our pain not come from God, this pain-filled life that God allows us to co-create actually enables us to attain Salvation. The pain from our poor (i.e. self-centered) choices gives us the opportunity to repent. It is therefore an integral part of the process that reveals God's all-loving Grace ("It is through many persecutions that we must enter the Kingdom of God." ~ Acts 14:22) ...

Just because God is loving, in no way means that the life He has given us must be easy. Indeed, what meaning is there in a life without challenge? What bliss is there in completing tasks that have no difficulty? What Peace do we attain from doing "good works" that do not involve risk and effort?

Our discomforts serve a two-fold function on the way back to our reunion with God. First, they re-mind us every time we stray from the path of God's Will ("To keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh ... Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but He said to me: My Grace is sufficient for you, for Power is made perfect in weakness." ~ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Second, they make our lives meaning-full by giving us the opportunity to persevere through challenge. Indeed, the more difficult a Righteous Act, the more Peace it brings us if we can actualize it ("[JC] Now which of them will Love him more? Simon answered: I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt. And Jesus said to him: You have judged rightly." ~ Luke 7:43) ...

Not only have we been given a conscious life to lead, we have also been given an adventure to enJoy (if we so choose)! We are allowed to experience our trials, that we might thereafter come to know the Peace that comes when we Love God (and life) anyway ("He disciplines us for our own Good, in order that we may share in His holiness." ~ Hebrews 12:11 & "For if we will unite with him in a death like his, we will certainly unite with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that we might no longer be enslaved to sin ... The death he died, he died to sin; but the Life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ." ~ Romans 6:5-11). Our displays of Faith-full Love (despite immense temptations to be selfish) are a true victory; the victory of walking Jesus' Way of selfless sacrifice – a victory that conquers the temptations of the material world ("For whatever is Born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world: our Faith." ~ 1 John 5:4) ...

Yes, we receive painful consequences from our sins, and yet those consequences are not condemned by God. Rather, He loves us enough to allow us to reap the effects of what we have sown – and allows for our Salvation anyway! ("If what has been built of the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If, however, the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; **that builder will also be saved**, but only as through fire." ~ 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 & "For godly grief produces repentance that leads to Salvation and brings no regret; only worldly grief produces death." ~ 2 Corinthians 7:10-11). It may seem that God is punishing you during times of trouble. When this is so, remember that it is not God's intention to ever cause you pain. Rather, it is the life God has created that is guiding you back from selfishness to the glory of selfless Love ("Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are seemingly punished by Him; for the Lord disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every child whom He accepts. Endure your trials, therefore, for the sake of discipline ... Discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later always yields the peaceful Fruit of Righteousness for those who heed its Guidance." ~ Hebrews 12:5-11) ...

By being given a life that tempts us to be selfish, and by being given a mind-body that makes most of its decisions based on its fear-filled desire to survive, all of us are apt to make mistakes and thereby "call" pain into our lives. Fortunately, it is this very dynamic that also gives

us the opportunity to attain Salvation by persevering in Righteousness despite those temptations (“By your endurance you will re-gain your Souls.” ~ Luke 21:19 & “So let us not grow weary in doing what is Right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” ~ Galatians 6:9 & “It is **through many persecutions** that we must enter The Kingdom of Heaven.” ~ Acts 14:22). Indeed, pain enables us to choose to endure, which in turn strengthens the very faith we need to actualize in order to attain the Peace of Salvation (“Endurance produces Character, and Character produces Faith, and Faith does not disappoint us.” ~ Romans 5:3-4 & “If we are being afflicted, it is for ... consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for ... consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering.” ~ 2 Corinthians 1:6) ...

We experience no unjust challenges

Most importantly, as God is innately loving and just, any trial we are experiencing is within our power to overcome (“No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. **God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength**, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” ~ 1 Corinthians 10:13). Indeed, the more pain we are experiencing in any moment, the more powerful we must be to have called such a challenge to ourselves; a difficulty that we are guaranteed to transcend as long as we persist in Faith-full Love, both towards God and the neighbor/enemy that seems to be causing our pain (“To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and grow weary from the work of our hands. And yet, when reviled we Bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly.” ~ 1 Corinthians 4:11-13 & “So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of Glory beyond all measure ...” ~ 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 & “(JC) Which one of them will Love him more?” Simon answered, “The one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.” And Jesus said to him, “You have judged rightly.” ~ Luke 7:42-43). In short, he or she who persists in Love, especially in those times when most tempted to be selfish (e.g. when in pain), will attain a full realization of the glory that comes from becoming a Child of God (“Show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of faith to the very end, so that you may not become sluggish, but rather be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the Promises.” ~ Hebrews 6:12 & “Recall the earlier times when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings ... Do not, therefore, abandon your confidence; it brings great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the Will of God you may receive what is promised.” ~ Hebrews 10:32+35-36 & “But those who look into the perfect law, the Law of Liberty, and persevere, being not mere hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be Blessed in their Doing.” ~ James 1:25) ...

Choose to See all Trials as Blessings

Jesus, God’s primary messenger for all Christians, summed up his intentions very simply when he said: “I have said these things to you that my Joy may be In You, and that your Joy may be complete.” (John 5:11). He wasn’t trying to make life difficult for us, though he realized that The Way is challenging to tread. We are all allowed to see our life’s “tests” as blessings, rather than as curses. Indeed, the Bible makes it clear that those who are walking Jesus’ Way do just that (“Blessed are those who are persecuted for Righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” ~ Matthew 5:10) ...

Rejoice, therefore, in your trials; knowing that they are enabling you to more powerfully serve others (“Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rather rejoice, insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings,

so that you will be glad and shout for Joy when that Glory is revealed.” ~ 1 Peter 4:12-13 & “Endure everything with patience, while Joy-fully Giving Thanks to the Father.” ~ Colossians 1:11-12). The Way to true Happiness and Contentment – Jesus’ Way of selflessness – is only as hard as we choose to make it (“We have this Treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary Power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” ~ 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 & “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your Souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” ~ Matthew 11:28-30) ...

Salvation is guaranteed regardless

And what if we refuse? What if the challenge is “too great” (i.e. we are too cowardly) for our fear-based ego-minds to overcome? Well, our judgment will come on our deathbeds and our suffering on that day will be immense (“I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them ... The one who rejects me and does not receive my Way has a judge; on the last day the Way itself wills serve as judge.” ~ John 12:47-48 – see also Hebrews 10:27), but God will still forgive us thereafter (“For by Grace you have been saved through Faith, and this not of your own doing; it is the Gift of God and not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” ~ Ephesians 2:8-9 & “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all people to myself.**” ~ John 12:32). Indeed, as was stated earlier, there is no darkness in God (1 John 1:5). As God is perfect Love (1 John 4:16) and as perfect Love knows no punishment (1 John 4:18), God is not doling out punishment or painful “guidance of any kind. Rather, He is simply waiting for us to be finished with the amount of suffering *that we are choosing to experience*; waiting to welcome us back to Him with open arms (“Likewise the Spirit Helps us in our weakness ... and God, who searches the Heart, Knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes ... according to the Will of God. We Know all things work Together for Good for those who Love God, who Accept their Calling in accordance with God’s Purpose.” ~ Romans 8:26-28 & “The eyes of the Lord are on the Righteous, and his ears are Open to their cry ... When the Righteous cry for help, the Lord Hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.” ~ Psalm 34:13-17). Indeed, we all receive pain commensurate with the ease of our selfish actions and joy commensurate with the difficulty of our Loving ones (“Truly I tell you, **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven**, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven.” ~ Matthew 18:18 & “For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that **each may Receive recompense for what has been Done in the body, whether Good or evil.**” ~ 2 Corinthians 5:10). And it is we who choose our own fate in this regard, not God. God allWays Loves us anyway! (“If we confess our sins, He who is Faithful and Just will Forgive us our sins and Cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” ~ 1 John 1:9 & “Cast all your anxieties on him, for he Cares for You.” ~ 1 Peter 5:7) ...

In conclusion, we can use the Bible to make God in our own image -- a vengeful ruler who “loves” us only as long as we satisfy certain requirements. Fortunately, we can also choose to see a “Bigger God” therein -- an all-Loving, all-Forgiving Father who cares for us regardless of the poor, painful decisions we repeatedly mak. The latter is a God who transcends all of Mankind’s pretty definitions of “love” and “justice.”

And this latter God is truly worthy of our praise ...

In essence, then which God will you choose to glorify today – the man-made God of fear and wrath or the true God of Forgiveness and Love?

May You have both the Wisdom to make this choice wisely and the Courage to act accordingly ...

“And **all of us**, with unveiled faces, seeing the Glory of the Lord **as though reflected in a mirror**, are being transformed **into the same image** - from one degree of Glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Holy Spirit.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:18