

## **How To Beat Terrorism (And Why S#!% Happens)**

Luke 13: 1-9

# 18 in our series "Stories Jesus Told"

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December 13, 2015

**Song** – "Victim of Love" by The Eagles, performed by Vince Colbert and band

What kind of love have you got?  
You should be home, but you're not  
A room full of noise and dangerous boys  
Still makes you thirsty and hot  
I heard about you and that man  
There's just one thing I don't understand  
You say he's a liar and he put out your fire  
How come you still got his gun in your hand?

Victim of love, I see a broken heart  
You got your stories to tell  
Victim of love, it's such an easy part  
And you know how to play it so well  
Some people never come clean  
I think you know what I mean  
You're walkin' the wire, pain and desire  
Looking for love in between  
Tell me your secrets, I'll tell you mine  
This ain't no time to be cool  
And tell all your girlfriends  
You "been around the world" and  
That talk is for losers and fools  
Victim of love, I see a broken heart  
I could be wrong, but I'm not, no I'm not  
Victim of love, we're not so far apart  
Show me, what kind of love have you got?

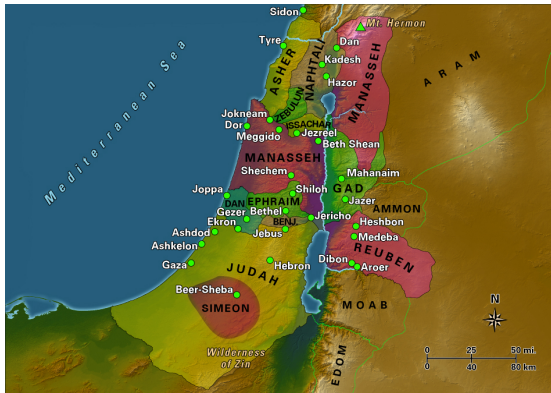
Victim of love, I see a broken heart  
I could be wrong, but I'm not  
Victim of love, we're not so far apart  
What kind of love have you got?  
Victim of love, you're just a victim of love  
I could be wrong, but I'm not, no I'm not  
Victim of love, now you're a victim of love  
What kind of love have you got?  
What kind of love have you got?  
What kind of love have you got?

### **Prayer**

Let's take a moment and pray. Let's do like we did last time, would you just pray for me, and pray for you, that God would speak to us? So, just take a moment in silence and talk to the Father.

So Father, help us to speak your gospel. In Jesus' name we pray, in His name. And we'll say "Amen" later because people think it means the end; and we need YOU to talk this whole time, Father, in Jesus' name.

## Message



Last week, we talked about this map and how all these countries were descendants of brothers and how these brothers wanted God the Father to divide the inheritance between them. I mentioned that the descendants of Aram, the Aramaeans are now called Syrians, and the descendants of Judah are now called Jews, and the descendants of Ishmael, out in the desert, are now called Arabs.

I noted that some of these folks hate Americans, and particularly American Christians, because they think we've jumped into this ancient battle on the side of Judah.

Now, according to Scripture, God did give some land to the Jews, and He took it away from the Jews, but He did say He gave it to the Jews in perpetuity. Actually, Jesus is the King of the Jews, and He seems bound and determined to make everyone a Jew, but not through the power of the sword, but through the power of God.

"Therefore, God is Father of all" *"who is over all, through all and in all,"* wrote Saint Paul, the former religious terrorist converted on the road to Damascus – in Syria.

Well, this past week, a couple came to see me. He appeared to be very angry. She was shaking, her eyes were puffy and wet with tears. She said, "Peter, I appreciate your ministry and your words last Sunday, but do you understand that they were innocent victims in San Bernadino? They were people just like us." Her voice grew shrill and her eyes were piercing: "Peter, it's easy for you to talk about the love of God – but that was evil, and they were victims and we could be next. It was terrorism!" She fell silent, waiting for my answer.

I looked at both of them for a time, chose my words very carefully and I said, "Do you think that those fourteen people were worse sinners than all the other residents of San Bernadino? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Do you think that those six people who drowned in the floods in Texas last month were worse offenders than all other Texans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will likewise perish."

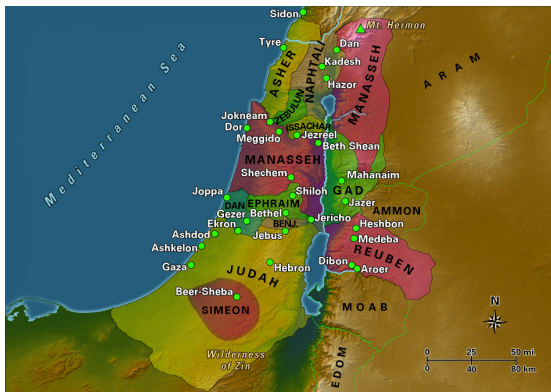
Now some of you are thinking, “Come on...you did not say that,” and that’s true; I did not. But in a rather similar situation, Jesus did!

In Luke 12, the man asked Jesus to divide the inheritance between him and his brother (just like the sons asked the Father, in Luke 15, to divide the inheritance). And now, Luke 13, verse 1.

Luke 13:1

*There were some present (or “who had come”) at the very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (Pontius Pilate)*

In 63 B.C. a powerful empire from overseas conquered this entire area.



For a time, Judea was governed by Rome through a puppet king, named Herod. In 26 A.D., Pontius Pilate was appointed governor of Judea. The Romans viewed the Jews as terrorists who resisted imperial rule. The Jews viewed the Romans as foreign terrorists who took their inheritance and oppressed their people.

“Terrorism” is a confusing word that we Americans usually reserve for other people, not in positions of power, like us, but if we go with Webster’s definition, that terrorism is “the systematic use of terror as a means of coercion,” then clearly, Pilate was a terrorist – a religious terrorist.<sup>1</sup>

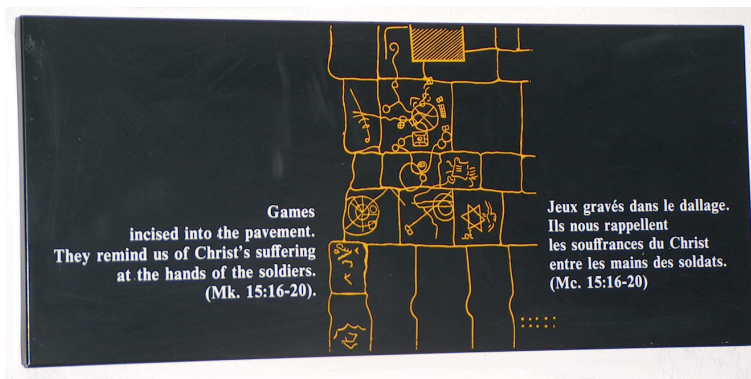
When we visited Jerusalem years ago, the guide showed us etchings in the pavement at the Roman fortress next to the temple, where Pilate tried Jesus. I took this picture:

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<sup>1</sup> It was around this time that Romans started worshipping the emperor and all political and military activity was integrally related to worship.



And I took this picture of the plaque explaining the etchings.



They explained that they had to do with a religious game in which the Romans would dress victims like kings and mock them and then sacrifice them to the Roman god Saturn. In this way, they could crucify criminals and provide a sacrifice for worshipping their deity. Some speculate that this is what happened to Jesus. Well, details are unclear, but it is very clear that Pilate and his Centurions were terrorists.

The chief instrument of Roman terror was the cross. At times, crosses would line the roads leading into Jerusalem. Dissidents who wouldn't bow to the emperor were crucified publicly to send a clear message and control the population with terror. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records many acts of terror committed by Pilate and the Romans against the Jews.

In Luke 13:1, it appears that Pilate's soldiers had slaughtered some Galilean Jews as they worshipped and sacrificed in the temple. Galileans were "salt of the earth" Jews, and the temple was absolutely sacred to the Jews, but not to Pilate.

It's impossible for us to understand the depths of this offense, which these messengers report to Jesus. But you can hear what they're asking: "Jesus, what do we do about these terrorists?" That's not an entirely irrelevant question, is it?

Several years ago, I read about half of the Quran. In my Quran, I underlined this verse, Sera 47:4

“When ye encounter the infidels, strike off their heads till ye have a great slaughter among them and of the rest make fast the fetters.”

I’ve learned that many Moslems believe that verse only refers to people living in Mecca about 1300 years ago, yet it’s not stated in the text and some obviously think it refers to folks like us.

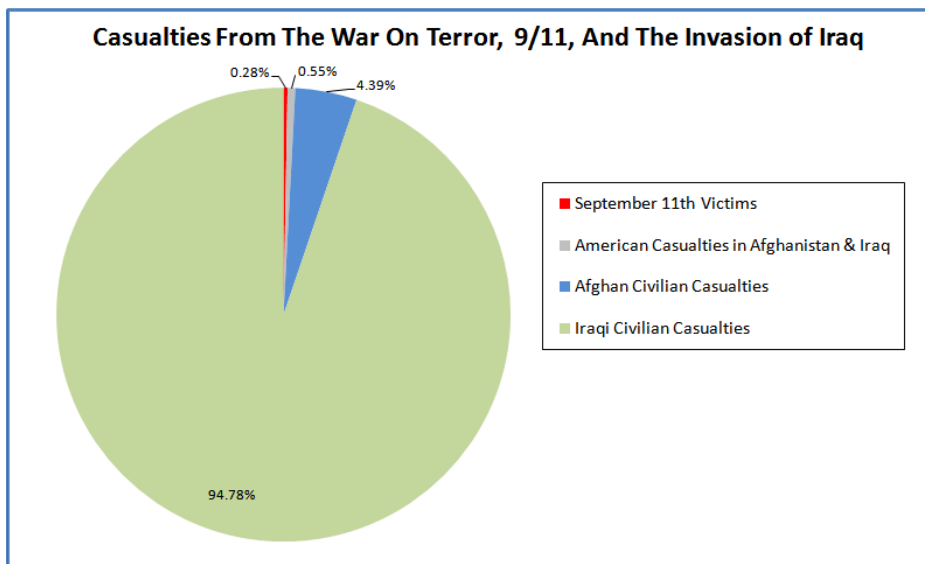
Now the Bible has some awfully violent texts, particularly in reference to Canaanites and the conquest of the Promised Land (the inheritance) 3500 years ago. But Jesus clearly said, *“Turn the other cheek;” “Love your enemies” for “my kingdom is not of this world.”* Both Old Testament Judaism and Islam, both Moses and Mohamed, are very much into kingdoms of this world and so their servants fight.

Donald Trump argues that we should fight and ban Muslims from immigrating to the U.S. for a time. If our goal is to save our lives, it might make sense to ban people who believe God commands them to cut off the heads of infidels. However, it would violate the Bill of Rights. But no one really believes the Bill of Rights—that Congress should make no law establishing or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Nazi-ism is a religion. Satanism is a religion. I’d argue that patriotism is a religion. The Bill of Rights, and definitely the Declaration of Independence, are religion – law based on “nature’s god.”

Maybe terrorism is a religion. I mean it’s a fundamental and systematic faith in the creative and saving power of violent competition and fear.

So what do we do about terrorism?

Well, since 9-11, we’ve declared war on terror. Maybe you’ve seen charts like this: This is 5 years old.



The red represents the 9-11 victims.

The grey – American Casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The blue – Afghan civilian casualties.

The green – Iraqi civilian casualties – victims.

For all I know, the chart may be rather inaccurate, but according to Wikipedia, the estimated number of Iraqi deaths, due to war – between 2003-2010 ranges from 151,000 to 1 million, and that's a lot! And none of those people were responsible for the 2,977 Americans that died in the 9-11 terrorist attack.

Now listen closely, I do not want to argue whether or not the United States should've gone to war. I just want to point out that our "war on terror" might not be working, for I imagine that now some folks in the Middle East are terrified of us!

The principalities and powers of this world run on terror. They use law and force to control with fear. That's why you pay your taxes – fear. They fight terror with terror and at best, so restrain terror with threats of more terror. That's what the governments of this world are called to do. But to beat terror, you need something more powerful than more terror. And if right now you're feeling a bit terrified or maybe agitated, frustrated, and perturbed at me – well, I think you're feeling what these messengers felt when they came to Jesus saying, "Jesus did you hear about the Galilean Jews who were slaughtered in the temple by Pilate's men?"

Luke 13: 2-5

*And he [Jesus] answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered (pascho– where we get the English word "Passion" or "the Passion") in this way? No, I tell you: but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (apollumi – "to lose" or "to be lost"). Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

In these four verses, Jesus covers:

- Human evil (Soldiers that slay worshippers in the temple)
- Natural evil (A tower that happened to fall)
- Evil in us – for we immediately grasp for the "tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" trying to justify ourselves and save ourselves.

Jesus says, "Repent, or you will likewise perish." Yikes!

"Repent!" They must be thinking: "We don't need to repent," "We're the victims. Jesus, make Pilate repent!" "Use your super-God powers, and make the Romans repent!"

"Repent" is the word, *Metanoia*, that we looked at in the story of the Prodigal Son. The older brother wouldn't repent, but the Prodigal was repented by a kiss when the Prodigal was at his very worst, covered in failure and pig poop. The older brother wouldn't party with his little brother, but his little brother was his inheritance. Jesus says, "Repent" and

they must think, “But we’re victims!” Are they victims? Are you a victim? That’s another confusing word, and Webster’s has two definitions:

1. A living being sacrificed to a deity
2. Someone that is “acted upon and adversely affected” That is someone who experiences a violation of their will – an “innocent victim.”

Well, are they? . . . Are we . . . innocent victims?

Ezekiel 18:4, God says, “All souls are mine.” *“The soul that sins shall die.”* So it shouldn’t surprise us that, in the Old Testament, everyone from the guy who picks up sticks on the Sabbath, to Moses who simply had a bad attitude toward a rock, everyone seems to be punished with death. The truly shocking thing is that anyone is alive at all!

Genesis 21: 16 The day God makes man - Adam – in His image, that day – God says to Adam – mankind: *“The day you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die.”* Every time you judge something, good or evil, you announce to everyone: “I ate of the tree and will die.” So, the big mystery in Scripture is: Why are you not dead? Or maybe you are, and don’t know it? Or maybe the sixth day is not yet over, for on the seventh day, man is perfected in the image of God and everything is good.

*“Repent or you will likewise perish.”* See? Jesus acts like we’re all guilty and death is coming for us all. Does that surprise you? I did some research: Do you realize that on average 153,000 people die each day in our world? That means that on 9-11, 1.9% of the people that died that day in this world died in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Last month on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 1 out of 1,000 that died that day in this world died in the terrorist attacks in Paris - 0.1%.

Last week on Friday, 1 out of 10,000 people that died that day in this world died in the terrorist attack in San Bernadino - 0.01%.

And as far as dying goes, I would much rather have my head lopped off, than die a slow agonizing death alone in a nursing home somewhere . . . Listen closely, in no way, do I mean to minimize deaths at the hands of terrorists. I’m just reminding you that we all must die! And it’s always terrifying. Could it be that we’re not so much terrified of terrorists, but terrified of death? It’s just that when terrorists terrify, it’s much harder to maintain our denial of death, and our illusion of control.

You may say, “But Peter, those are untimely deaths!” Listen closely, there are no untimely deaths.

Psalms 139:16

*“Your eyes saw my unformed substance (my golem); in your book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me when as yet there were none of them.”*

You may say, “But Peter. These deaths were the result of evil.” Listen closely, they are all the result of evil, and now this is something truly terrifying: the evil isn’t only in them – it’s also in you. See?

It isn't like God kills some because "some" sinned.  
It's more like God kills all because all have sinned.

Maybe you're terrified of God. Does that mean God is a terrorist?

Jesus says, "*Repent or likewise perish.*" What the hell does that mean?

How did almost all of Jesus' disciples perish? Didn't all of them (except for John) suffer excruciating deaths at the hands of Roman and Jewish terrorists?

How did Jesus perish?

In Jerusalem, where His blood wasn't just mingled with sacrifice, it *was* the sacrifice. He is the temple, and He was sacrificed at the hands of Pilate – Jesus, the Galilean. And He said to us, "*Pick up a cross and follow.*"

Jesus perished...

Just like the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of sacrifice. Jesus perished just like them, and yet . . . not at all like them.

So these men come to Jesus as victims of a horrifying terrorist event and Jesus says, "*Repent or you will likewise perish.*"

Luke 13:6

*And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree"*

Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, but Luke wrote in Greek, so he must've been aware that "*fig*" (*syke*) and "*soul*" (*psyche*) sound just alike in Greek. "*A man had a syke.*" A soul or a *psyche* is at least a paradigm of thought, and Jesus has just told them that they need to change their paradigm of thought – that is "repent." Change their *syke* – their *fig*.

Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves,  
having eaten of the "*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" – the tree of Law.

Justifying yourself with the law is a way of thinking – a *psyche*, a soul.

*"A man had a syke [says Jesus] planted in his vineyard . . ."*

Everyone knew Isaiah 5: 7, "*the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting.*" Yet, Israel has a fruitless *syke*.

*"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none."*

The week before Jesus died, just before he cleansed the temple, He came into Jerusalem looking for figs. And when He found a fig tree that bore no fruit – he cursed it. Within a few days, he would be cursed and nailed to a tree and perish – "lose his life, but find it." He'd rise, transforming "the tree of death" into "the tree of life."



That's a pretty amazing story!

And Jesus compares each of us to a tree

. . .or maybe two trees in the garden that is your soul.

Luke 13: 6-9 (ESV) Verse 6

*“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. (“uproot it”) Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone (aphiemi: “let it be, forgive it, suffer it”) this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure (koprion – that’s Greek vernacular for manure). Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can (“Uproot it”).”*

Now, I think it’s really important that I accurately communicate the meaning of what the gardener says to the vineyard owner. Basically:

“Lord forgive it, and I’ll throw some *shit* on it and maybe it will grow some fruit next year.”

Do you ever pray, “God, I know you love me and you forgive me, but what’s with the sh...-manure? I hate manure!”

At staff this week, Kimberly told me about a movie in which a man finds himself stranded on a world that’s been cursed with death. (It kind of reminds me of here and now in this world . . .) Well, there is no life there and nothing will grow, but the man is saved . . . by poop.

Clip from *The Martian* (official trailer)

[During a manned mission to mars, Astronaut Mark Watney, Matt Damon, is presumed dead after a fierce storm and is left behind by his crew. But Watney has survived and finds himself stranded and alone on the hostile planet.]

(The scene opens on space overlooking the sunlight edge of the world. The words, “Based on the best selling novel” show on the screen as Matt Damon’s voice, playing Mark Watney, is heard.)

Mark Watney: *I’m entering this log for the record, . . .*

(Mark Watney is in a spacesuit shutting an airlock door.)

Mark Watney: *This is Mark Watney, . . .*

(The scene shifts again to show Mark standing before a round portal, with the closed door behind him, taking off his helmet.)

Mark: *And I’m still alive. . .*

(The scene changes to show the rooms of the space station. Mark is out of his spacesuit, wrapped in a blanket, and seated before a desk with maps, paper, and a writing utensil before him. His eyes are deeply shadowed.)

Mark: *Obviously. . .*

(The scene shifts once more to show a large, darkened room full of lit computers and empty seats all facing a large screen of smaller screens filled with graphs, measurements, and other data. The camera backs up to show more empty desks as Mark continues to speak. )

Mark: *I have no way to contact NASA, or my crewmates. But . . .even if I could, it would take four years for another manned mission to reach me. And I'm gonna have design to last thirty one days.*  
 (The camera shifts to show a large round open airlock with a round room at the end of it full of scientific equipment. The camera moves in through the portal closing in on a chair in the center of the room with a nearby ladder leading up to equipment above.)

Mark: *So, in the face of overwhelming odds*  
 (The scene shifts to show a t-shirted Mark turning tiredly from hanging plastic all around the room to view the plastic wrapped ladder in the center and the rest of the room.)

Mark: *I am left with only one option.*  
 (The camera moves around Mark in the center of the room with a roll of duct tape tapping in his hands thinking as he looks about the room.)

Mark: *I am going to have to science the shit out of this!*  
 (The scene shows Mark in the center of the room with blue surgical gloves on his hands and putting protective goggles over his eyes performing various scientific experiments.)

Mark: *Okay! Let's do the math. I gotta figure out how to grow four year's worth of food. .*  
 (The scene shows him standing before an open cupboard and pulling out a vacuum sealed package of poop and looking at it. He pours out the contents of the package into the dirt.)

Mark: *here ...on a planet where nothing grows.*  
 (He makes a face and then the scene shifts to show his fingers stroking a plant shoot in the dirt. Then the image shifts to show him pulling a rack laden with equipment out of another cupboard, then to show him looking into a lit up orb in a frame in front of him.)

Mark: *But, if I can't figure out a way to make contact with*  
 (The image shows his right hand reaching into the center of the framed orb with a screwdriver and touching a red button in the center top of it)

Mark: *NASA, none of this . . .matters anyway.*  
 (The scene changes and Mark is shown obtaining contact with Earth. )

Woman: *Houston, be advised. We've got a video message.*  
Standing Crewmember: *It's directed to the whole crew. Play it.*  
 (Everyone in the control room watches a message from Mark)  
 Control room operator: Mark Watley is still alive!  
 (Mark is shown in his space suit standing before a rover and looking up into the sky. Then the scene shifts to show a computer screen, which has the following on it:

TEXT BASED [INCOMING MESSAGE]  
 -----  
 HRM: WE'RE COMING FOR YOU WATNEY

(The scene shifts to show Mark out of the space suit, gloved up, and goggled with arms akimbo in the middle of the tented room of his space station.)

Mark: *Whoooo! In your face, Neil Armstrong!*

That's Ridley Scott's new movie *The Martian*. Hope I didn't wreck the story for you, but it's important to know that the man—Adam—is saved by poop.

My Grandpa was a farmer. One of his most important pieces of equipment was the manure spreader.

The late author and professor of religion, Phyllis Tickle once said,  
 "God is both the shit and the fan."

I don't think that's quite accurate, but God does control all manure and all the fans. And we all wonder, "Why does sh%! happen?" Ask my Grandpa, and he would tell you, "You can't grow fruit without it."

Maybe God is growing fruit like faith, and it grows in doubt, or grace. It grows where sin increased. That's where "*Grace abounds all the more.*" Faith, hope, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control . . . Maybe the tree that produces that fruit only grows in some pretty broken and dirty soil.

Did you know that the cross is also called "*a tree*?" It grows in a garden (John 19:41), where Christ's body was placed in the ground. The fruit of the tree is "*body broken and blood shed*," the love of God poured out. In fact, you really wouldn't know who God is, except for knowledge gained from that tree – but not just dead knowledge, like law, but resurrected and living knowledge: Jesus.

The fruit of that tree is eternal life. There we die with Christ and rise with Christ. The death is temporal; the life is eternal. But we all must die to truly live.

The tree (a tree) is a remarkable thing! It takes dirt (*Adamah*), (and we're made of dirt), dirt and poop (our flesh eats life and makes poop). A tree takes dirt and poop and mixes it with light and makes fruit. The cross takes sin and transforms it into grace. It takes fear and transforms it into faith. In fear and faithlessness, we took the life of God on that tree. It was sin and everything died.

If you only take the good to justify yourself, your psyche is dead and it must be changed or uprooted. In fear and faithlessness, we took the life of God on that tree, but in faithfulness and love, God gave His life on that tree. When we receive His life as a gift, we bear the fruit that "*befits repentance*," not fear, but faith in love – a new psyche, the logic of love. If you don't surrender your old psyche here and now; if you don't lose it, - before your body dies, the Lord may take drastic measures to uproot it in the future.

Well, there is a world of amazing philosophy and theology in what I just said, and I can barely begin to understand it. But, for now, just understand what my Grandpa understood and that is: Poop makes stuff grow.

I get a little magazine from the "Voice of the Martyrs" ministry. Last week, it contained a letter from a Syrian Pastor. It reads as follows:

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus, I bring to you greetings from your brothers and sisters in Syria. We are one body of Christ; if one suffers, all others will suffer with him.

No suffering is like the suffering in Syria right now. Syria was a very beautiful country, with a population of more than 20 million. Christians were over 20 percent of the population, but right now they are only 7 percent.

Whatever evil things you can imagine are nothing compared to what is really happening in Syria: the destruction, the killing, the kidnappings. The extremists kidnapped one of my relatives; they cut off his head and they started to play soccer with his head. They take the children and put many of them in the oven to kill them. They kidnap the women and rape them and leave them naked in the streets. When they take any woman, they declare, "Allah akbar" [God is great]. Maybe 10 men take turns on one woman and rape her; they do that until the woman dies. They do this everywhere, especially to Christians.

There is great evil! But at the same time, our God is great! God can turn all the evil to good. All the bad things in Syria, God will turn it to good; that is our belief! This is our prayer. Before the war, not many people attended our church. We could not have imagined or dreamed about how the evangelical churches are right now.

Evangelical means good news.

Thousands of families attend the evangelical churches – Catholics and Orthodox and Muslims. They came as refugees to Damascus. We are distributing hundreds of thousands of Bibles to people, mostly to Muslims. Right now there is a big revival inside the church, and the churches cannot seat any more people.

Things sound pretty scary in Syria right now, pretty scary and pretty fruitful. The pastor tells a few more stories and then writes:

Many Christians in Syria right now are choosing to stay on the frontlines, and it's difficult. *You* can stand beside us by battling through prayer.

What kind of prayer? "God protect us from Syrians?" Or "God be glorified in Syria!"

God is glorified in "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" So, how did Jesus fight terrorism?

Well, you know the story, He spoke truth for three years though He knew it would get Him killed. He spoke truth and, at the right time, He journeyed to Jerusalem. He spoke truth to the priests, scribes, and Pharisees in the temple, they were all terrorists. They controlled others with fear. He spoke truth to King Herod and Pontius Pilate. He spoke truth to all the terrorists and then allowed the terrorists to kill him. He was a Galilean that Pilate sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem, but He did not "*likewise perish.*"

Pilate asked "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" and Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight, but my kingdom is not from this world.*" Pilate said, "*Don't you realize that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?*" And Jesus said, "*You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.*" You see? Jesus was no victim.

He said, "*No one takes my life from me. I lay it down.*" Jesus was no victim, and yet He was *the* victim. He was and is the victim of love and God is love. Jesus knew that the Father is Good, and He knew the Father is in total control, and so He surrenders His will to the Father's will.

It must've been utterly terrifying, but He never surrendered to terror, but transformed fear into faith, faith in love. Luke records that as He hung on the tree, He cried, "*Father forgive them, they know not what they do.*" Forgive who?? Forgive the terrorists? You see? He did not "*likewise perish.*" He did not perish in faithlessness and fear, so He was not trapped by death. But, having journeyed through a universe of pain, having descended into hell, at the ninth hour, Luke records that the curtain in the temple ripped and Jesus cried out with a great voice, "*Father into your hands I commit my spirit,*" and He expired. He surrendered His life to love and God is Love.

He perished – the word is “*apollumi*,” it’s also translated “lose.” Jesus said, “*Unless you lose your life, (perish your life) for my sake, (Jesus’ sake) you cannot find it.*” Jesus did not “*likewise perish*” trapped by fear of death in living death. Jesus surrendered His life as a sacrifice of love. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that it was at this moment when the Roman centurion saw how Jesus breathed his last and surrendered His Spirit, that the terrorists, that is the Roman centurion and those that were with him, cried out, “*Surely this man was the son of God!*” When they saw how he died, they repented.

On the third day, He rose from the dead and appeared to the women saying, “*Don’t be afraid*” no more fear. Scripture says, “*Fear is the beginning of wisdom.*” Jesus is wisdom incarnate, and at first, He can really stress you out; at first, God is absolutely terrifying. He terrorizes terrorists who know nothing but terror. “*Fear is the beginning of wisdom.*” Psalm 111:10, but “*Perfect love casts out fear*” 1 John 4: 18. God is love and Jesus is the Word of love.

Jesus has been fighting terrorism since Adam and Eve hid in fig leaves and trees. God won the war on terror on a tree in a garden where we took His life and He forgave His life. – He is Good. He’s always won. He is eternal, but now we get to watch the victory unfold in time. When you believe the victory, you have eternal life. Do you realize that you cannot be a victim of terrorism if you cannot be terrorized? And what is it that terrorizes us? How about death?

Scripture says, in Hebrews 2: 14,

*“the Lord partook of flesh and blood that through death, He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.”*

The power of death is your own fear of death and the devil is the ultimate terrorist. As Jesus once told my wife, “With fear, you put flesh on the evil one.” We’re terrified to die, to lose our psyche, our self. (Suicide is not dying to yourself.) We’re all terrified to truly die, but if we don’t die, we cannot live. “*Truly, truly, unless a grain of wheat (a seed) falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*”

You know, faith is death and life. Every time you trust God, instead of trusting yourself, you die to yourself and begin to live an eternal life, a fruitful life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. You join the Party. It could be that we wealthy, self-satisfied, and proud American Christians are so afraid to die, that we can no longer live, or party.

You remember that in the story of the Prodigal Son, it’s the wealthy, self-righteous, and proud older brother who refuses to die to himself and share the inheritance that traps himself in outer darkness and cannot join the party, and it’s the younger brother, of whom the father says, he was “*dead and is alive,*” He was “*lost (apollumi – perished) and is found*” that can party, the one that died.

One day, when my father was dying, my four-year-old nephew, Jared, called my dad and said, “Poppy, can I come over and have ice cream with you one more time before you die?” And my dad said, “Sure Jared.” He wouldn’t let fear of death spoil the ice cream. And, on the night he was betrayed, Jesus said to His disciples, *“I have longed to eat this meal with you;”* He wouldn’t let the fear of death spoil the ice cream.

Paul wrote that this is a clear omen to your opponents of their destruction and your salvation. It’s fruit – and it’s growing in Syria. And that’s how we beat terrorism! *But* if you give in to terror, you trap yourself in death and you start following someone other than Jesus.

You know, Mohammed taught that basically all the stuff about Jesus was true, except that part about Him being God (or the Son of God) and that part about Him dying on the cross. So you can have all the t-shirts, bumper stickers, and miracles that you want – without a God who suffers. It seems to me that Mohammed rejected the cross, which is *“the tree of life”* dispensing grace, and returned to a religion of law governed by fear, the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

This is Sura 2, verse 277 “God doesn’t love the unfaithful and evil.”

And Sura 35 v. 34

“For the unfaithful is the fire of hell; to die shall never be decreed them.”

Endless death. Can’t find it in the Bible.

Sura 4 v. 59

“the voices said to Mohammed ‘We will in the end, cast into the fire so often as their skins shall be well burnt, we shall change them for fresh skins that they may taste the torment.’”

And Sura 47: 8 “If you help God, God will help you.”  
That is, “God helps those, who help themselves.”

If you thought that was in the Bible, it’s not. God helps those who *can’t* help themselves. *“God is salvation,”* in a word, Jesus, and according to Scripture, He is consuming fire, but not that endlessly torments the unfaithful, but fire that consumes unfaithfulness and death, and *“makes all things new”*—including Syrian terrorists like Saint Paul.

God is Love and nothing is more powerful than Love.

But do you see what happens when we surrender to terror? We die, and we reject the Messiah. When I listen to our national debate about the danger of Syrian refugees, when I witness our terror of Muslims because they *might* be terrorists and we *might* lose our lives, I begin to wonder if maybe it’s not Jesus that we’re following any more.

Moses, (or even more) Mohammed is who unexamined, terrified “Christian” people want Jesus to be. But Jesus is not the same as Mohammed or Moses. Jesus is the

incarnation and ultimate revelation of absolute, unfailing, eternal and perfect love. God is Love. And this is how He beats terrorism and redeems terrorists.

### **Communion**

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and He broke it, saying, "This is my body given to you. Take it. Eat it. Do it in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup saying, "This cup is the covenant." What is the power with which He makes all those brothers, all those people, one family a covenant? "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. And do it in remembrance of me."

In *this* is love, "*perfect love*."

Close your eyes and pray this prayer after me:

"Father in heaven, what am I so afraid of?"

(Now sit and listen.)

It could be death. It could be someone else's death, as if you were their savior. Isn't it some form of losing control? Maybe you thought your life was your control. Maybe you're afraid of your lack of faith, your sin. Maybe you're afraid of your fear; and afraid, not to be afraid. That's your psyche of fear, your prison of "flesh." There is only one to fear, and He is perfect love. Say, "Our Father in heaven, I give you my psyche, my self, my fear." "Thank you for *your* psyche, *your* self, *Jesus*. Amen." Now come to the table and ingest perfect love.

### **Benediction**

(A video is shown you can read the message below or watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSv4vBcFyvo>)

A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE CROSS TO ISIS

*The world is talking about you.*

*Your apocalyptic dreams and spectacular sins*

*Are now awakening the Middle East*

*In your holy war, come to holy ground.*

*Come children of Abraham come.*

*The People of the Cross gather at your gates with a Message.*

*Love is coming after you*

*Like a rush of wind grazing over the pacific*

*From the hills of the Mount of Olives to the desert winds of Jordan*

*From the cedars of Lebanon to the silk roads of the East*

*An army comes.*

*With no tanks or soldiers*

*But an army of martyrs*

*Faithful*

*Unto death*

*Carrying a message of life*

*The People of the Cross*

*Come to die at your gates*

*If you won't hear our message with words*

*Then we will show you*

*With our lives*

*Laid down.*

*For every throat you slit, and every woman you rape*

*For every man you burn alive*

*And every child you turn to dust  
There is blood on your hands brother.*

*But come brothers. Come.  
Come with your blood stained hands.  
Come with your eyes full of murder for the people of the cross  
Come lay your guns and your knives at the foot of the cross*

*A love that is overdue and overwhelming  
Breathes through your cities.  
Though your sins are like scarlet  
They can be washed white as snow  
Though you call yourselves servants  
He will make you sons  
Where can you run from His love?  
Even the darkness cannot hide you  
Come brothers come  
There is the sound of a rushing rain  
To remove every sin and bind every wound.*

*You die for your God, Our God died for us*

*The King of Kings comes as the Sacrificial Lamb slain on the altar where you should have been  
Jesus Christ Isa Al Masih  
Walks through the Middle East  
(A scene of several Christian men about to be beheaded is shown)*

*There is forgiveness tonight oh brother  
There is healing for your sins oh brother.  
We are no different  
Apart from His blood, we are no worse than the worst jihadist.  
Christ has been crucified. Once, and for All  
To make sinners like you and me into brothers  
Even you.  
Even now.*

*A LETTER FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE CROSS TO ISIS*

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*