

Relativity and the Reason for Wrong

Romans 3:1-24

Romans (no. 8 in the series)

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Video and audio versions available online:

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This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!

Prayer

And so Lord, it is all about you. And so like the twenty-four elders around the throne, we take our crowns and we cast them at your feet. Lord, we want to cast them at your feet continually and yet that means someone is putting them back on our heads as we cast them at your feet, and I think that's you because, this is a shock, you're all about us. So God, may we be all about you because you have made yourself all about us; may we love because you first loved us, and you haven't stopped. So God, forgive us for holding onto our crowns, for holding the ball, when you ask us to participate in the great dance that is your kingdom. We pray that we would do that now Father, as we preach. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Message



My Dad was a safety fanatic, but it's understandable—he grew up in the dust bowl during the depression, fought in World War Two, and lost several siblings to disease and suicide. He was a safety fanatic. As kids we always had to come in when it was lightning anywhere in the world. He wouldn't let me play football, get a motorcycle or a trampoline because they were all too dangerous.

One day I came home to find my four children jumping on our trampoline in their ski jackets, in the summer in 90-degree heat—they were little sweaty balls of exhaustion and death. I said, “What are you doing?” They said, “Poppy (my Dad who was babysitting them) was afraid we’d get Mosquito Bites, West Nile, and die, so he said we had to wear our coats and bug repellent to play outside.” My Dad was really into safety, but he was just nuts for something else.



This is Peak One in the Ten Mile range just above Frisco and my uncle Chuck’s old log cabin. You’ll notice that it comes to a point, kind of like a lightning rod. One day when I was a boy, just Dad and I, decided to climb it together. We had plenty of bug spray, water purification pills, hats for sunscreen, and we started early to avoid afternoon storms and lightening. We started early, but, it turns out, not early enough. It must’ve been early afternoon when we made it to the ridge line on the left. I was hungry, exhausted, and my feet hurt, when I noticed little puffs of white that began to grow and turn black. Before long we heard rumbling, and then we saw lightning, and I said “Dad, maybe we should turn back?” He said something like, “yeah, maybe.” And then, kept hiking... and it kept thundering.

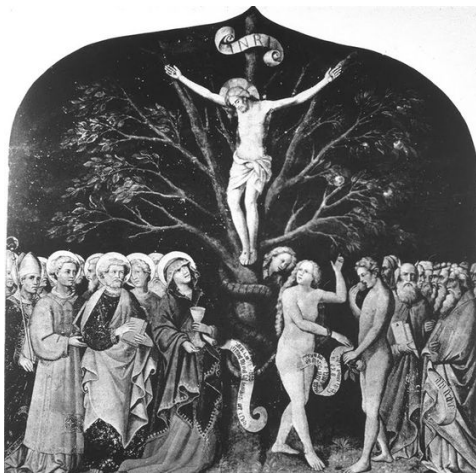
We were in sight of the top, just a few hundred yards away, when I looked at my Dad and his hair was standing on end, I felt my hair standing on end. The wind was beginning to howl, and the rain was beginning to fall. I heard a crackling sound in the rocks beneath my feet. And I yelled to my Dad, “Dad, we need to turn back!” Dad looked at the peak, and then he looked at me, and he yelled, “We can make it.” And I thought “This is so wrong!”

Do you ever look around at this world and think “This is so wrong” and then look at God, your Father, and say, “I thought I was following you?” God our Father cannot choose the wrong, because the wrong is literally defined as that which God does not choose—that is evil. God can’t choose evil, by definition. Philosophically speaking, you could argue that no one could actually chose evil, because reality is the manifestation of God’s choice. So,

- Choosing evil is choosing an absence of God and his choice: the Good.
- Choosing death is choosing an absence of the Life.
- Choosing a lie is choosing the absence of the Truth.
- Choosing wrong is choosing what’s not Right, the absence of Righteousness.
- Choosing the dark is choosing an absence of the Light.
- Choosing to sin is choosing an absence of Love—it is choosing bondage to an illusion, the void—nothing.

God our father can't choose evil, but perhaps he can choose that we would gain the knowledge of what he does not choose—that is evil? God our father doesn't choose evil, and "he himself tempts no one," according to the book of Jamesⁱ, but he sure does seem to lead us into temptation. Why else would Jesus say, "When you talk to our Dad, say 'Our Dad who art in Heaven... lead us not into temptation,'" if Dad never led us into temptation? ⁱⁱ

You know the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Paul calls Jesus, the last Adam, and we're all the first Adam, and it seems he leads us into temptation as well. Are you never tempted?



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

God put two naked people with no knowledge of Good and evil, in a garden with an evil talking snake and a tree in the middle of that garden filled with beautiful fruit that would make them die, saying "the day you eat of it dying you will die." If that's not leading a person into temptation, I don't know what is. How would they know that the Word of God is Good? How would they know that the Life is Good? How would they know that Death is Evil?

We discussed this in detail last summer, but whenever God leads people into temptation, it seems to be the temptation of putting him to the test. If God says don't covet and you do covet, aren't you putting the Word of God to the test—you are testing the Word of God to see if it's Good and if it's life. You are judging God's Judgment.

Well, God doesn't tempt us with evil, but he sure seems to lead us into temptation in a world full of evil and an insane amount of suffering. You know he could've given Hitler a heart attack and saved the lives of six million Jews. He could've just squashed the first mutation of some virus that we now call the Corona virus, and you would never have to wear a mask. He could've made women not sexy, whiskey not tasty, and life a little more safe. He could've just kept the snake out of the garden. And he could've just kept the snake out of Judas.

Is it right that God let us all go so wrong?

- What's the reason for wrong?
- What's the reason for all the sin and suffering of this wretched world?
- Why would he tempt us to put him to the test?

Well, my Dad wasn't God, didn't control the weather, and didn't want me to sin. He didn't want me to die, but he sure seemed to be exercising some bad judgment, At least that was my judgment of his judgment.

The Rocks were buzzing, the wind was howling, the lightning was crashing and I yelled "We need to go back!" My dad looked at the peak and looked back at me with a look I'd never seen before—his eyes were wild; they were on fire. He smiled, and then he yelled back, "We can do this; Let's do this!"

And we did. We ran to the top in the wind, the rain, and the lightning. We stayed for only a second as we gazed at the view and my Dad screamed "Isn't this wonderful?"

Alone on that peak with my Dad, in the storm, is one of my all-time favorite memories. It was the day I learned that there are some things worth dying for. People will sometimes say, "There's nothing worth dying for." Which means, of course, that they have consigned themselves, in the words of Will Willimon, consigned themselves to "the unpleasant task of dying for nothing."ⁱⁱⁱ We all sin. We all suffer. We all are dying. And we all must die.

Well, my Dad taught me that there are some things worth dying for; in specific, the view from the top of the mountain. It's not something you can get from a book, like another person's photograph of the view from the top of the mountain. It's something you must experience yourself; something you must feel in your bones and sore feet, and even experience through the eyes of your father. The view from the top of the mountain.

Did you know, that according to the prophet Ezekiel, Eden was at the top of a Holy Mountain^{iv} "in the east" (*khedem*), which is also translated, "In the beginning," or "at the start," or "from the rising of the sun." According to many of the Rabbi's in Jesus day, Eden was understood as this primordial and eschatological state at the beginning and end of time.^v In the same way the Temple was to be the presence of this primordial and eschatological state at the beginning and end of time. The inner Sanctuary was the presence of the age to come—God's age. And in the Sanctuary was the judgment seat between the two cherubim like those that guarded the way to the tree of life in the middle of the garden. And, of course, the Temple was on a holy mountain that many believe is that very same mountain—Eden, Moriah, Zion, and Calvary.

- It's the mountain where Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, and God provided a ram, a full-grown lamb in his place.
- It's the mountain where David offered himself in exchange for the lives of the people of Jerusalem and the Angel of Yahweh held back his sword.
- It's the mountain upon which Jesus, the Word of God, offered himself on a tree in garden, the earth shook, the sky grew black, and we took the life of the only man who is Good, as the only man who is Good gave his life for all, and to all, in order to fill all, inhabit all, and animate all.
- It's the mountain upon which the New Jerusalem will descend, into which will flow the kings of the earth, and within which is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.^{vi}

Perhaps all the chaos, sin, suffering, pain, and sorrow of this world is worth the view from the top of that Mountain. Perhaps it doesn't last for only a second; perhaps it's eternal. Perhaps, everything that's anything is relative to that, for that is the judgment of God, which creates and sustains everything that's anything and even defines the nothing. So perhaps our wrongs are not the reason for the judgment of God. Perhaps the judgment of God is the reason for all that we now perceive to be wrong.

Last week we talked about Paul's Theological Theory of Relativity. It's the idea that just as Einstein took the speed of light to be a constant, which revealed that space, time, matter, and energy were relative. So, we must take the Judgment of God as a constant—undivided, unchanging, and eternal—and see everything else as relative to it, or Him—that is, the Light of the World.

Romans 3:3-26. Romans is hard to preach, because it's so packed with concepts, but all the concepts have amazing stories tied to their tales. So, I just want to read this and circle back to a story that should cause a storm in your soul, but then reveal the view from the top of the mountain. If you're following along, you'll notice that although I'm reading from the ESV, I'll put some things in brackets, not because they are the less literal translation, but because they are the more literal translation. Most translators don't seem to believe Paul's Theological Theory of Relativity.

Romans 3:3-26:

Does their [our] faithlessness [that's the variable] nullify the faithfulness of God [that's the constant]? ⁴ By no means [hell no]! Let God be true [that's the constant] though every [man is] a liar [the variable]^{vii}, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged," (that's David in Psalm 51:4). ⁵ But if our unrighteousness [our wrong] serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous [wrong] to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means [hell no]! For then [otherwise] how could God judge the world? [as if that's the only thing that mattered] ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being [judged] as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? —as some people slanderously charge us with saying. ~~Their condemnation~~ [The judgment upon them] is just. ⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off [worse off, or excused]? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (David, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3) ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." (David Psalm 5:9) "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." (David Psalm 140:3) ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known" (the son of David, Solomon Proverbs 1:16, Isaiah 59:7-8). ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (David, Psalm 36:1) ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by

works of the law no ~~human-being~~ [*sarx*: flesh] will be justified [made right] in his sight, since through the law [that's knowledge of good and evil reduced to human words] comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through ~~faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe~~ [the faith of Jesus Christ to all, and upon all those believing (YLT)]. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified [or “are being justified”] [made right or being made right] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

So, who has sinned and fallen short? All.
And who is justified or being justified? All. The same “all.”

That's the view from the top of the mountain. And it's worth all the chaos, sin, suffering and sorrow of this crazy world. It's not just an idea, or some words in a book; it's a living reality to which you are giving birth, like David, like Paul, like Adam. And this is not a temporal judgment; this is an eternal judgment filling all of space and time.

So, in Romans 3:3 Paul states The Theological Theory of Relativity, which we preached on last week: Let God be faithful and true—that's the Universal Constant. And let every Adam, be an unfaithful liar—we are the variables. And then Paul clearly implies that we should also let God's Judgment be the constant, and let our judgment be the variable. In other words—we cannot change God's judgment, but God's judgment will change us and the entire world.

Then he quotes David in Psalm 51:4b, assuming that we all know Psalm 51:4a and the incident to which David is referring. Psalm 51:3-4, this is what David says to God before the judgement seat of God on the ark of the covenant, in the sanctuary of the Lord on the Holy Mountain, after Nathan the Prophet convicts him of taking Bathsheba and then taking the life of her husband, Uriah, to cover his sin and justify his judgment. This is what David says to God after Nathan convicts him and pronounces the Judgment of God on David.

David prays, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast (relentless Love). Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment” Or as Paul quotes it “that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged.”

David and Paul are saying that when David sinned, he sinned against the Goodness in Bathsheba and God alone is Good. And he sinned against the Life in Uriah the Hittite, and Jesus is the Life. David saw the Good, (the beautiful) and took the Good—he basically raped Bathsheba. And to cover his shame, he took the Life of Uriah. Why? “So that, God would be justified in His Judgment.” “So that,” we would all look and say, “Wow that is a really great Judgment.”

Do you remember God's Judgment on David? In 2nd Samuel 11 and 12, David is hiding from The Judgment of God, for he will not let himself be false and God be true, when Nathan the prophet tells him the story of a rich man that slaughtered a poor man's lamb. David gets enraged at the Rich man, and Nathan says, “You are the man (the rich man that slaughtered the lamb.”

Then Nathan issues God's judgment saying, "You have despised the Word of the Lord, (2nd Sam. 12:9)" He has put the Word of the Lord to the test. And who is the Word of the Lord? Jesus, the Son of David and the Lamb of God.

Then Nathan prophecies saying:

1. "Because... you have taken the wife of Uriah... Out of your own house I will raise up evil, take your wives, and give them to another in the sight of the sun."^{viii}

As you may know, David's son Absalom rebels against David, captures Jerusalem and rapes David's wives on the top of David's house in the sun for all to see.^{ix} But check this out: it's not retribution on David, its discipline for David, for...

2. Nathan reveals that David's sin has been put away—it's forgiven.

Sometimes we think that the forgiveness of God means that there will be no consequences; but it does not. God "disciplines the one he loves."^x So, Nathan tells David that God has "put away" his sin, but...

3. "Nevertheless" says Nathan to David, "the child that is born to you shall die."^{xi}

I guess that's how God puts away David's sin... The Lord afflicts David's son. David throws himself upon the ground for six days and on the seventh day—the Son of David Born to Bathsheba dies.^{xii} When they tell David, he goes into the Sanctuary on the Holy Mountain and worships—His words are recorded in Psalm 51 and Romans 3: "I sinned against you... that you would be justified in your judgment." And there is a fourth manifestation of the judgment:

4. David goes home and "comforts" Bathsheba—in Biblical terminology he "knows" her, but in a new way.

He doesn't take her like a piece of meat or fruit; he comforts her as his bride. She conceives & bears fruit—the Prince of Peace; Solomon, the Son of David. Bathsheba is the great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother of Jesus.^{xiii} And as Paul has told us: Jesus is the judgment of God. And now, to think: that's where Jesus came from—the sin of David.

So just WOW! Could there ever be a better Judgment for David's sin? And yet, what came first? The Judgment of God or the sin of David? In the Revelation Jesus says "I am the root and the offspring of David" That means I am the beginning and end of David. I am the source of David, and the son of David; the Son of Man (Adam).

We (Adam) think we sin, and so God judges, and so exhibits his wrath. But David and Paul seem to think God judged, and so we sinned, so God could reveal the death and resurrection of Jesus, his judgment, and we could all justify his judgment saying "Wow, what an incredible judgment. I want to fall down and worship that judgment. 'Surely this man is the son of God.'"

David is forgiven, yet David is changed, for a son of David suffered for his sins and a son of David rose from the ashes of his sins; Jesus is the son of David. Jesus (the Word of God and Judgment of God) is how God makes David, the man after God's own heart, the greatest worshiper that ever lived—the author of the Psalms.

You know Paul will quote David as if it's Jesus that's talking. Even Jesus will quote David as if it was always himself that was talking. As if Jesus is the Judgment of God in David—David's good judgment. The reason for David's wrong is the revelation of Jesus, who is the righteousness of David. The reason for the wrong is the right. And do you remember the reason for Paul's wrong, how God makes Paul, and how God makes him right?

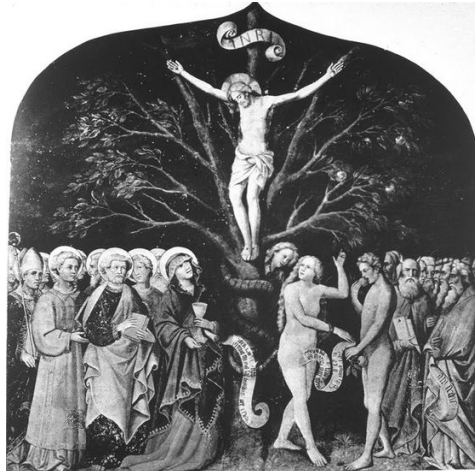
I think David was the chief of all sinners in the Old Testament. Paul just tells us that he is the Chief of Sinners for all time.^{xiv} "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" wrote Paul.

It happened on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus when and where Paul was confronted by the Light, who said to Paul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me. It's me in them that you're persecuting." The Light blinds Paul—but it's not retribution, it's discipline, so that Paul can see the light of the world. To Ananias, who heals Paul, The Light says "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name to the nations. But I will show him what he must suffer for my name. (That's Yeshua—salvation). Paul suffers, Paul dies with Christ, Paul rises with Christ, and Paul gives birth to you—the church

So, what's the reason for the wrong? Isn't it the judgment of God? And how does God make Paul & make him right? Isn't it the judgment of God? God chose Paul before he was born; God didn't do wrong, but he "let" Paul do wrong. He "let" Paul exercise very bad judgment, then revealed his Good Judgment and so, Paul justified God's Judgment—by preaching the Gospel and giving birth to the Children of God—who are the Judgment of God: Humanity in the image and likeness of God, that is: you.

So, what's the reason for your wrong and how does God make you right? How does God make Adam in the image and likeness of himself? Why did he put a tree designed to kill in the middle of that garden on top of that holy mountain, with two innocent but very ignorant people and then leave them alone with an evil talking snake?

How could God let it go so wrong? Isn't it because he made a judgment that has always been so right? He said "Let us make Adam, mankind, in our own image after our likeness"—That's the image and likeness of love, for God is Love. He said, "Adam will Love me with all his heart, heart, mind soul and strength, and Adam will love his neighbor as he loves himself... because he wants to."



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

That's God's Judgment, and that's what was hanging on the tree. The Good and the Life, the Love of God in Human flesh, Jesus our Helper, our Husband. God said let us make man in our own image. Then, He let man make a bad judgment. In order that he might reveal his Good Judgment. That we might see his judgment, fall in love with his judgment, freely choose his judgment, and give birth to his judgment in this painful world.

He let us put him to the test, that he might pass the test, and we would justify his judgment, saying "That is the perfect judgment. And I don't ever want to put him to the test again." So, shall I sin "that grace may abound? to quote Paul, "Hell No!"^{xv} I no longer want to crucify the love of my life, my Helper.

- He let us know evil, that we might choose the Good, which is His Life.
- He let us take his life, that he might give us his life, that we might receive his life, and freely choose to become his life—the image and likeness of God.
- He let us all be unfaithful, that we might see that he remains faithful, that we might fall in love with the faithful one and become his faithful body.
- He let us all be untrue, that he might reveal that he is true, that we might fall in love with the Truth, not abuse the Truth, but surrender to the Truth, and give birth to the Truth.

So, what's the reason for the wrong? The righteous judgment of God. He "consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all."^{xvi} It happens on the top of the Holy Mountain.

Paul writes "Let all men be untrue." Why? Because God has "Let all men—not some men—be untrue." The Problem is that we won't let ourselves be untrue. Do you remember what happened right after Adam and Eve took the Life of the Good from the Tree in the Middle of the Garden? They hid themselves from the judgment of God in the leaves of the tree, and then they tried to justify themselves with lies. They were untrue, but they wouldn't let themselves be untrue and so, were terrified of God's Judgment—the Truth.

If you would only let yourself be untrue because you are. I used to think I needed to sin so that Grace would abound. (I was a pastor's kid and didn't have much of a riveting testimony.) But now I see I've already crucified the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I don't need to sin, I'm already the chief of sinners.

If you would only let yourself be unfaithful and untrue, you would see that God is always faithful and true, and that God has made and is making you faithful and true. And then you'd have no problem with God making everyone faithful and true.

For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

Romans 3:22-24 (ESV)

With Paul, you would gladly justify God's Judgment, saying, "There is no distinction: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And all are justified by his grace as a gift." And do you see? That's the rub: You can't be justified by his grace as a gift, if you think that you have justified yourself with stolen fruit. That "you" that thinks it can justify itself cannot be justified. That you—the false you—must die. But there is at least one thing worth dying for, and that's the view from the top of the holy mountain.

Fourteen years ago on Thanksgiving weekend, I was defrocked from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church for not publicly confessing that God would not and could not justify all by his grace as a gift. I had seen that God had justified me when I could not justify myself. And I had seen that God had justified Paul when Paul could not justify himself. And I had hoped that God would justify all by his grace as a gift, for I realized that none could justify themselves. And I was beginning to realize just why this idea made people so angry: if God justifies all, no one can justify themselves, and the self that believes it can justify itself must be judged by the judgment of God for it is the work of the devil, a prison dark and deep as hell^{xvii}.

As I told you this summer, just a few weeks before I was tried, on top of Lookout Mountain, I had just finished the sermon and people were coming forward for communion. Susan grabbed my arm and said, "Peter I just saw your Dad. He was standing right in front of us," and then she described his eyes. She said, 'Peter, they were like on fire.' He reached out his hands, holding a bowl, and said, 'Susan and Peter do not be afraid to drink from the cup the Lord has for you.'"

I think all of that means “Let it happen. The storm, the chaos, all the sin, suffering, and sorrow—it’s worth the view from the top of the mountain.” I think the Sanctuary is called to proclaim the view from the top of the mountain. And some of you have suffered for that. This is what I would say to you: “‘Let God be true and let every man be a liar’. It will offend all men and cause quite a storm, but it’s worth the view from the top of the mountain.”

When Jesus hung on the tree on the top of the Holy Mountain, he lifted his head and said “Father forgive them. They know not what they do.” They have no knowledge of Good and evil. So, let’s show them. Father let’s forgive them.^{xviii} “Forgive is the word ‘*Aphiemi*’ in Greek. *Aphiemi* is also translated “Let.” Like “Let’s let them. Let’s let this happen; We can do this. Father, let all of them be faithless, and we’ll show them that we are faithful. Let all of them be untrue, and we’ll show them the Truth and make them all True. Father forgive them.” You must forgive yourself, and you must forgive all men. And that can be quite painful. But it’s worth the view from the top of the mountain.

This is the view from the top of the mountain:

Communion

I think he’s so excited and there’s fire in his eyes as he says:
“This is my body given to you, take and eat. What you take I give (I fore-give).
And this cup, sweetheart, this is the covenant in my blood. Take and drink, all of you.”

The judgement of God.

Benediction

Well, that’s the view from the top of the mountain. Even if we only believe it a little bit—like a mustard seed size—that’s the view. And it’ll grow. You know my Dad on earth couldn’t control the weather, but I’m convinced that even if he could, I don’t think he would’ve changed anything about that storm on top of the mountain that day.

You have a Father in Heaven who is sovereign over every rain drop and even the devil.

- This is the bad news: You’ve made bad choices, you’re not in control, and you’re going to die. You should’ve already figured that out by now.
- This is the good news: You’re Father only makes good choices, he’s in complete control, and you’re going to die so that you can live and see the view from the top of the mountain:

Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”^{xix}

In his name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ James 1:13. The word translated “tempt” in James 1:13, *peirazo*, is also translated “test” and is the word used for Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. It is also the verbal form of the word used by Jesus in the Lord’s prayer in which we are told to pray “lead us not into temptation.”

ⁱⁱ See “Lead us (not) into temptation” Matthew 6:9-15 <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/lead-us-not-into-temptation/>

ⁱⁱⁱ A Princeton student being interviewed by a reporter was questioned about the prospect of American troops going to Afghanistan when the Soviet Union invaded there. “There’s nothing worth dying for,” was her response. Which means of course that one day she shall have the unpleasant task of dying for nothing.

- Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, pp. 149-150.

^{iv} This explains how four rivers are said to flow out of Eden. That’s hard to picture unless Eden is a high place like Colorado. At least four rivers flow out of Colorado. And if Eden is pictured as elevated above the earth on a spiritual or holy mountain from the beginning of time, perhaps those rivers could include the Euphrates, Nile, Tigris, and Jordan.

^v Sebastian Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian Hymns on Paradise, popular patristic series, introduction by Sebastian Brock*, (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990) pp. 49-50

^{vi} Tonight Peter Hiatt was preaching from [Matthew 6](#) in a continuation of last week’s sermon. The topic was not being psyched out by the devil and into taking our problems and ourselves too seriously but rather live in the moment and realize that Satan has no influence over “now”, only yesterday and tomorrow, so right now we need to dance with Jesus, and store up some treasure.

Through much of the sermon I got in the way and so was unable to see anything. At the beginning of the evening God took a sword and cut my chest open and asked me for my heart. Near the end of the sermon, He had to do it again because I was still getting in the way. Once He got me out of the way so I could see, He said “come up here with me and I will show you”. He was on the cross and so He crucified me on the cross with Him. As I looked out over the room I saw many different people doing many different things. I saw people praying, worshipping, crying, scared, anxious, children running around... Next I started seeing a lot of suffering. I saw people with cancer, enduring horrible abuse, involved in ritualistic sacrifice. I also saw a person executed while on their knees, face and hands uplifted as their body was riddled with bullets. I saw people die in the German concentration camps, and I saw Peter (from the Bible) get stoned. At that point the vision just ended and I told God, “this is a message of hope, that can’t be it. There must be more.” He told me to be patient and to come up a little bit higher and then to look closer. When I did I saw that all of this was happening all at once within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the gleaming white walls with flags flying in the wind. “This is heaven.” He said, “This is what the New Jerusalem is made of.”

- Dale Eben, 3-15-2003, Lookout Mountain Community Church

Then our Lord made me think happily, ‘Where is there now one jot of your pain or your sorrow?’ And I was very happy. I understood that we are now, as our Lord intends it, dying with him on his cross in our pain and our passion; and if we willingly remain on the same cross with his help and his grace until the final moment, the countenance he turns on us will suddenly change, and we shall be with him in heaven. There will be no time between one moment and the next, and everything will be turned to joy; and this is what he meant in this showing: ‘Where is there now one jot of your pain or your sorrow?’ And we shall be entirely blessed.

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 69-70

^{vii} I said in my alarm, “All mankind are liars.” – Psalm 116:11

^{viii} 2 Samuel 11:10-11

^{ix} 2 Samuel 16:20-22

^x And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. -Hebrews 12:5-8 (notice that “all” have participated in discipline and God disciplines “the one he loves.”)

^{xi} 2 Samuel 12:14

^{xii} 2 Samuel 12:15-18

^{xiii} Bathsheba means “Daughter of Seven, Seventh Daughter, Daughter of Perfection,” or even “village of perfection.” The names all fit for she gives birth to the Messiah (She’s the great, great, super great grandma of Jesus) and all things with him.

^{xiv} David basically raped Uriah's Bride, but was judged by God, and then wed Uriah's Bride giving birth to Jesus.

Paul was basically raping Jesus' bride, was then judged by God, and then wed to Jesus giving birth to you—the church, Jesus' bride.

This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. – 1 Timothy 1:14 NKJV

^{xv} Romans 6:1

^{xvi} Romans 11:32

^{xvii} Because it is Hell, as in Hades/Sheol. It's Gehenna, the judgment of God, that sets a person free from Hades/Sheol. It's Gehenna that burns away the false self, free the true self to love and be loved.

^{xviii} Luke 23:34

^{xix} Revelation 5:13