

To My Catholic Friends & Family

IN THE BIBLE, GOD TELLS US:

He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe—the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created for him and by him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16, 17

He has given mankind ‘His Word’—the Bible—to teach us all about life, all about Himself, and all about the loving, eternal relationship He wants us to accept.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- John 1:12

His Word is eternal; it will far outlast this world.

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." 1 Peter 1:24-25

His Word is above all authority and all of creation is subject to it. No angel, human, church, organization or government is in authority over the Bible.

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created for him and by him. Colossians 1:16

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! Galatians 1:8

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! . . . Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. Acts 4:8, 19

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." Mark 7:7-8

Nor is there anyone other than God Himself, who is to have ultimate authority over telling us what it means.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

(Learning from a good Bible teacher can be extremely beneficial, but it is each person's responsibility to make sure that what they are being taught agrees with the Bible. The early

church even did this regarding the Apostle Paul's teaching.)

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11

Each person is to read God's Word, learn from it and to do what it says. (If we do, we will be eternally blessed).

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. . . Colossians 3:16

IN THE BIBLE, GOD ALSO TELLS US:

He created mankind in His image—so we could relate to Him. [We have been created 'in God's image,' in that we have thought, free-will and emotions; we are self-aware, creative, intellectual and relational (with languages), and have a sense of morality.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

Every human being has knowingly sinned—done what we know, and what God says is wrong.

*. . . for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23*

*We **all**, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6*

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. Romans 2:14-15

God is absolutely holy, perfect and just, and cannot allow, accept or ignore a single sin—anywhere in the universe—ever. [If a person knowingly allows a crime to go unpunished—when he has the ability to do something about it—he becomes unjust himself. In human law this is known as 'aiding and abetting a criminal.' A judge is held to an even higher standard.]

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Leviticus 11:44

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. Deuteronomy 32:4

The punishment for (un-forgiven) sin, which God has established, is eternal punishment in Hell.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14

God stepped into His creation to take the punishment for the sin of mankind—so we could be forgiven and could have an eternal relationship with Him—and so we would not have to be punished for it ourselves. [A father can pay a fine for a child—suffering for what the child has done, while sparing the child the consequences of their misdeeds—allowing justice to be fully carried out.]

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. 1 Peter 3:18

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

God wants every person to receive His forgiveness.

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

We must have this substitutionary sacrifice applied to our sin, in order to be forgiven. [If there was some other way to be forgiven, Jesus would not have needed to suffer and die for our sins.]

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace . . . Ephesians 1:7

We are made acceptable to God—we enter into this eternal relationship with Him—when we accept Him as Lord and Savior. ‘Lord’ – We accept His right to rule over us. ‘Savior’ – We ask Him to apply His sacrifice to our sin, thereby forgiving us.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord . . . Acts 3:19

When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are immediately and eternally forgiven for all of our sins, past, present and future.

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He **forgave us all our sins**, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2:13-14*

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive us our sins** and purify us **from all unrighteousness**. 1 John 1:9*

If we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we go immediately to Heaven when we die. [There is no intermediate place where we suffer for part of our sin! If such a place existed, this would mean that Almighty God's death on the cross was inadequate.]

*Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in **paradise**.” Luke 23:43*

This is what Jesus said to the criminal on the cross, who was being crucified next to Him.

If we have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, we go immediately to torment when we die, and then to Hell at the final judgment.

. . . the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 2 Peter 2:9

Doing good things (obeying commandments, serving people, following sacraments) cannot erase sin—cannot make us un-guilty—and, therefore, cannot make us acceptable to God. [Stealing an item from a store cannot be erased by paying for the next fifty. Running a red-light cannot be

erased by stopping at the next fifty.]

*For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, **not by works**, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:10-11

We are intended to serve God—to do ‘good works.’ This, however, is not to earn His love and mercy, but in response to it, and because of our new relationship with Him. [Works do not bring salvation, they are evidence of it. Earning forgiveness is an oxymoron; if we have to earn it, it is not forgiveness.]

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:14-17

If we try to get to Heaven by doing good works—pridefully expecting God to overlook our sin because of all that we have ‘done for Him’—we will stumble over God’s sacrifice on the cross and will end up in Hell.

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" Galatians 2:21

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." Romans 9:30-33.

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; . . . Isaiah 64:6

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

OTHER THINGS GOD TELLS US IN THE BIBLE:

We should never revere a human, but rather, God alone.

And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Matthew 23:9

No human has the power to forgive sins—only God can do this.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" – Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Luke 5:21-25

When we pray, we talk directly to God the Father – in Jesus’ name. We do not go through any human – living or dead.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 2:5

We should not create statues or images of any kind, which we bow down to or worship.

Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, ...

Deuteronomy 4:15-16

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.

Exodus 20:4-5

We should not pray repetitious prayers, but rather talk to God in a normal fashion. [How would a parent feel, if their child spoke to them in repetitious fashion? “Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice. Mom, I love you; please give me juice.”]

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:7-8.

Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus was born.

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Matthew 12:46

Mary—as well as every human being, except Jesus (i.e. God)—was/is sinful and in need of a savior; of God’s forgiveness.

*And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in **God my Savior**, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. Luke 1:46-48*

*... for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23*

*We **all**, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6*

QUESTION:

The Bible says that a ‘forgiven’ person goes immediately to Heaven upon death—such as the guilty criminal who accepted salvation while being crucified next to Jesus.

*Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in **paradise**.”*

Luke 23:43

The Bible says that a ‘non-forgiven’ person will suffer for all of eternity in Hell.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Matthew 25:46

Since this is the case, why would an organization ‘sell indulgences’—offer to pray upon receiving a donation, for the earlier release of loved ones from ‘purgatory’—since ‘purgatory’ doesn’t exist? (If purgatory—an imaginary place of punishment for the purging of the sins of Catholics—actually existed, this would mean that Almighty God’s death on the cross wasn’t good enough.)

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He **forgave us all our sins**, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Colossians 2:13-14*

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